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Fast Horses

The Racehorse in Health, Disease and Afterlife, 1800 - 1920

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Fast Horses:
The Racehorse in Health, Disease and
Afterlife, 1800 – 1920

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Abstract

Sports historians have identified the 19th century as a period of significant change in the sport of horseracing, during which it evolved from a sporting pastime of the landed gentry into an industry, and came under increased regulatory control from the Jockey Club. Although racehorses were the animals around which the sport developed and was practiced, they have rarely featured as historical actors in histories of horse racing. My research aims to rectify the situation by positioning the racehorse at the centre of the historical narrative. In this thesis, I examine how racehorses influenced horse racing in England between 1800-1920, and how humans interacted with and acted upon racehorses. This thesis shows that a Thoroughbred horse was not automatically a racehorse, however. Rather, it was an equine athlete that was artificially created and maintained by humans, and entered into a variety of unique relationships with them.

Prized as equine athletes, financial assets, and as individuals with differing behavioural characteristics, collectively, racehorses were expected to demonstrate that they participated willingly in the sport. The racehorse's body was a vital indicator of health, condition and likely future performance, and 19th century understanding of it was greatly influenced by humoralism, which, in turn, shaped training regimes, feeding, housing, and equine healthcare. Racehorses' bodies and behaviours were simultaneously physical enablers of human sport, and limiting factors, as racehorse trainers sought to bring the animals in their care into peak condition without them becoming diseased.

Yet, racehorses also remained exceptions among the equine population. During the 19th century, change and innovation in farriery and hoof-care was driven primarily by the perceived needs of urban working horses, instead of racehorses. Famous racehorses were exceptions to the already exceptional, and the practice of burying and memorialising the most prized racehorses after they had died, allowed racehorse owners to demonstrate their compassion for animals, while simultaneously creating places and material animal-things for reminiscence.

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Introduction

There's a painting on display at Calke Abbey in Derbyshire of two men standing by while a bay racehorse called Furiband grazes in a field. On the left, a gentleman (presumably the horse's owner, Sir Henry Harpur) leans onto his cane. His gaze is averted downward, as if he is looking at a particular part of the horse, or maybe-- lost in thought-- he isn't intentionally looking at anything at all. To the right, a well-dressed groom holds the grazing horse. There is a slack in the leadrope as Furiband grazes quietly beside him. The groom's hand rests gently on the horse's neck, his fingers woven between the animal's mane.

This painting is different from other horse paintings of the period. No jockey is pictured just before or after an important race. This isn't an imposing stallion in his paddock at a stud, or a famous racehorse posed to show off its conformation and athleticism. Rather, it is a quiet moment between humans and a horse, a moment of co-existing in the same place in time. Ignoring the dress of the two gentlemen, it's a scene that wouldn't be out of place in many equestrian contexts today. As a horse rider, I am conscious of these parallels; although centuries separate us, most horse riders today have been the groom in the painting, resting a hand on a horse's neck while we let it graze beside us.

What can our equestrian forefathers (two-legged and four-legged) tell us about their shared existence? In researching this thesis, I sought to uncover one particular aspect of human and equine co-existence: the sport of horse racing in England in the 19th and early 20th century. I followed these elite pleasure horses and their humans through archives and books, paintings and architecture, taxidermy and skeletons. The goal was to uncover important developments in the sport of horse racing, and what that history looks like when the horse becomes an actor within the historical narrative, while at the same time, never losing sight of moments like that depicted in the painting at Calke Abbey, free from the burden of milestones and great achievements – humans and racehorses co-existing in the past.

Histories of horse racing

Today, horse racing is the second-most popular spectator sport in Britain; only football is more popular.¹ Over centuries, it has evolved into a global industry far removed from its origins as an aristocratic pastime, yet unashamedly proud of its heritage. From statues to street names, parades of retired winners to the very names of many of the races run today, public history forms an almost unavoidable aspect of participation and spectating. Tune in to any major televised race, and you'll see the archive video footage played before the big event – Red Rum winning the Grand National, Lester Piggott's Derby victory on Nijinsky... A steady stream of biographies and popular histories of horse racing demonstrate the public appetite for stories of heroism and triumph over adversity, and keep alive the public fascination for horse racing's iconic figures.

Since the publication of Wray Vamplew's *The Turf* in 1976, horse racing has also become a subject that has attracted growing attention from academic historians, who have up-ended the heroic narrative of sporting champions in favour of a more critical look at the sport's development. Horse racing has proved a useful lens through which to study the history of sport, leisure and public spectacle. In *The Turf*, Vamplew focused on the economic history of horse racing, using many previous histories of racing as key source materials, as well as the racing industry publications *Ruff's Guide to the Turf* and *The Racing Calendar*, newspapers and sporting magazines. Focusing on horse racing between 1830 and 1939 (although primarily the 19th century), his social and economic study examined the sport under four headings: 'promotion', 'control', 'participation', and 'gambling'.² Vamplew showed the importance of institutions such as the Jockey Club and the key figures in the industry, and how they had

¹ British Horseracing Authority, *Annual Report and Accounts*, 2016, 71.

<https://www.britishhorseracing.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/BHA-Annual-Report-2016-1.pdf>

² Wray Vamplew, *The Turf* (London: Penguin Press, 1976)

shaped horse racing into a formalised sport. He examined public interest in racing which was largely cross-class, but argued that racing did little to break down class barriers. Jockeys, Vamplew showed, could earn vast sums of money, but apprentices found it difficult to break into the ranks of professional jockeys, and those that did entered a high-risk world with constant worries about 'making weight'. Trainers faced an equally anxious existence, plagued by financial concerns which were exacerbated by clients who didn't pay their bills on time. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Vamplew described gambling as "the keystone of racing", and devoted three chapters to the subject. *The Turf* demonstrated the sheer breadth of topics which horse racing encompassed and greatly influenced future sports historians, particularly Mike Huggins. What is most notable with *The Turf*, however, is how much it mirrors earlier histories of racing. While less of a chronological account of racing, it is decidedly interested in the history of the self-proclaimed 'important figures' and institutions of racing.

Within sports history, Huggins has distanced himself from Vamplew's *The Turf* from the very start. In *Flat Racing and British Society 1790-1914*, he rejects Vamplew's vision of racing as a sport controlled by upper-class gentlemen, and frames his argument around social class to prove his hypothesis that the middle classes were hugely influential within racing. Between the late 18th century and the 1920s, horse racing changed from a sporting pastime primarily patronised by the landed gentry into a 'highly commercialised' industry.³ As early as 1809, nearly half of all racehorse owners were from middle-class backgrounds.⁴ Money played a critical role in horse racing. Gambling had been a central aspect of the sport for centuries as racehorse owners and race spectators wagered money on which horse would win a contest. Participation in gambling increased significantly during the 19th century, especially as the proliferation of the sporting press and sporting columns in newspapers, facilitated by the telegraph, provided detailed information about the fitness and prospective chances of horses

³ Mike Huggins, *Flat Racing and British Society 1790-1914: A Social and Economic History*, (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 2000), 166. Mike Huggins, *Horse racing and the British 1919-30* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 4.

⁴ Huggins, *Flat Racing and British Society*, p. 78.

to a broad segment of British society.⁵ Horse racing had widespread support across all social classes within Britain. It ‘embodied shared community values, notions of male sociability, a social cement where high and low could meet together in joint enjoyment of sport,’ which helped ensure the sport’s survival into the 20th century.⁶ Although Huggins recognises horse racing as an industry, *Flat Racing* viewed its actors largely as participants in a leisure industry, and as such, Huggins’s work, although sports history, forms part of the then growing historical interest in leisure as a whole.

Prior to the publication of *Flat Racing and British Society*, Huggins published an article on racing stables and the rural communities around horse racing. Huggins’ article predominantly focused on stable lads and apprentice jockeys. He examined the daily life of live-in stable lads. Of particular interest, Huggins found that in communities with a heavy racing presence such as Middleham at least 12% of the town was employed in the racing industry. Thus, he asserted that racing played an important role in the local economy to these places. He also remarked upon the cultural role of racing to these communities, with public celebrations for great racing victories, and the huge funerals of trainers.⁷ This study is particularly useful, as it considers horse racing beyond the racetrack itself, and examines the day-to-day work of caring for and training racehorses which most other studies omit.

Huggins’ later book, *Horseracing and the British 1919-1939*, explores the complex link between racing and British society, and the unique culture of the sport. It effectively shows that, during the inter-war period, horse racing saw cross-class spectatorship and participation, yet also remained under the almost unquestioned control of elite bodies such as the Jockey Club. Women may have been barred from being trainers and jockeys, but they were more likely to participate in racing than in other sports during the period. While this study

⁵ *Ibid.*, 22 – 28.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 233.

⁷ Mike Huggins, “Nineteenth-Century Racehorse Stables in their Rural Setting: A Social and Economic Study,” *Rural History*, 7, (1996): 177-190.

continues Huggins' trend to focus on class and racing, unlike his previous study which focused on an earlier period, in this later history of racing, Huggins draws links between the upper-class dominance of racing's seats of power and its rejection of change and progress, a noted difference from his findings in his other major study. It is also one of the few sports histories of racing to make use of non-text based sources such as oral histories (not conducted by Huggins' himself, however), and his chapter on media coverage and leisure makes reference to racing-themed films; the bibliography, however, shows that non-text based sources are sparse.⁸ Since this publication, Huggins has also published further articles which call upon sports historians to make use of a wider range of sources.⁹

Clearly reacting against Huggins' *Flat Racing and British Society 1790-1914*, Pinfold puts the landed gentry back into the centre of horse racing in his study of racing and the aristocracy in his study of upper-class involvement in racing in the 19th century.¹⁰ In an earlier study, Pinfold examined the founding of races at Aintree, which again focused primarily on class.¹¹ Thus, while his work responds directly to Huggins', it too is dominated by its focus on social class. Kay and Vamplew have also researched 'gentlemen riders' (that is wealthy amateurs who competed in races), which went beyond the class-focus to explore the culture of amateur racing. Kay and Vamplew point out that the high risks of injury

⁸ Mike Huggins, *Horseracing and the British, 1919-39* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003)

⁹ Mike Huggins, "The Sporting Gaze: Towards a Visual Turn in Sports History – Documenting Art and Sport," *Journal of Sport History*, 35, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 311-329. Mike Huggins, "Death, Memorialisation and the Victorian Sporting hero," *Local Historian*, 38, no. 4 (November 2008): 257-265.

¹⁰ John Pinfold, "Horse Racing and the Upper Classes in the Nineteenth Century," *Sport in History*, 28, no. 3 (2008): 414-430.

¹¹ John Pinfold, "Where the Champion Horses Run: The Origin of Aintree Racecourse and the Grand National," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 15, no. 2 (1998): 137-151.

associated with National Hunt Racing made it a ‘manly’ pursuit which required a great deal of bravery, but it was simultaneously prone to corruption.¹²

Perhaps because Huggins and Vamplew have so dominated racing history, the majority of racing history scholarship has focused on issues of class, economics and politics. With *The Turf and Flat Racing and British Society 1790-1914* as a road map, racing history has examined amateur jockeys, the professionalization of jockeys, the creation of the Grand National, the abolition of government-funded racing, overseas influence on the sport, doping, and the influence of the railways and horse transportation on racing,¹³ and the veracity of *The Racing Calendar* as a source.¹⁴

Yet, when reading these histories, it is difficult not to follow Sandra Swart’s lead and ask, ‘Where’s the bloody horse?’¹⁵ In Vamplew’s 2013 survey of historical scholarship on the subject of horse racing, the only animal-centric history he cites is *Noble Brutes*, Donna Landry’s cultural history of the Thoroughbred horse, which charts how horses of Eastern origins came to be heralded as English icons that shaped an English style of horsemanship.¹⁶ As Vamplew pointed out,

¹² Wray Vamplew and Joyce Kay, “Captains Courageous: Gentlemen Riders in British Horse Racing, 1866-1914,” *Sport in History*, 26, no. 3 (2006): 370-385.

¹³ Tolston and Vamplew took on Vamplew’s statement in *The Turf* that ‘the railways revolutionized horse racing’. They concluded that, while the railways may have caused some trends to become more prevalent, the railways did not, as Vamplew had previously asserted, “revolutionise the sport.” See: John Tolson and Wray Vamplew, “Facilitation not Revolution: Railways and British Flat Racing 1830–1914,” *Sport in History*, 23, no. 1 (2003): 89-106.

¹⁴ Joyce Kay, “Still Going After All These Years: Text, Truth and the Racing Calendar,” *Sport in History*, 29, no. 3, (2009): 353-366.

¹⁵ Sandra Swart, “‘But Where is the Bloody Horse?’ Textuality and Corporeality in the ‘Animal Turn,’” *Journal of Literary Studies*, 23, no. 3 (2009): 271 – 292.

¹⁶ Wray Vamplew, “From Godolphin to Godolphin: The Turf Relaid,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Horse racing*, ed. Rebecca Cassidy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 57 -68.

The Turf ‘set the research agenda’;¹⁷ whether intentionally or unintentionally, this agenda resulted in a history of horse racing that is mostly devoid of horses.

A few histories of racing do hint at rather fascinating equine developments within the sport, however. Peter Mewett’s study of 18th and early 19th century human athlete training shows that racehorse training methods influenced early human sports coaching methods.¹⁸ Kay’s research on the Royal Plates shows how these publicly funded races for horses over long distances, which were supposed to encourage owning, racing and breeding horses with stamina, gradually declined from the middle of the 18th century until the end of the 19th century. As the number of starters dwindled, and doubt grew about the utility of these races, the Royal Plates (and therefore public money being used to fund prizes for horse racing) were abolished in 1888.¹⁹ The growing commercialization of horse racing, as Huggins points out, probably also influenced racehorse owners to race ever younger animals as they sought ‘to capitalise on their investment in horseflesh more quickly,’ which resulted in a drastic change in the ages of racehorses in training, and the duration of time they remained in training stables, between 1800 - 1860.²⁰ Mitsuda has acknowledged that the decline of longer races for older horses carrying heavier weights, and the growing popularity of shorter sprint races for young racehorses, lead to a growing concern in the late 19th century that the Thoroughbred horse was deteriorating.²¹ At the turn of the 20th century, horse racing also became the site of the first modern anti-doping movement, as racing insiders and the general

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 57

¹⁸ Peter G. Mewett, “From Horses to Humans: Species Crossovers in the Origin of Modern Sports Training,” *Sport History Review*, 33 (2002): 95 – 120.

¹⁹ Joyce Kay, “Closing the Stable Door and the Public Purse: The Rise and Fall of the Royal Plates,” *The Sports Historian*, 20, no. 1 (2000): 18 – 32.

²⁰ Huggins, *Flat Racing and British Society*, 164.

²¹ Tatsuya Mitsuda, “The Deterioration of the Thoroughbred in Late Nineteenth-Century England,” *The Hiyoshi review of English Studies*, no.55 (2009): 33- 68.

public voiced their concern over the possibility that drugs were being administered to racehorses to alter their performance.²²

While the 19th century was undoubtedly a period of significant change within the sport of horse racing, these studies indicate that the history of horse racing is considerably more complex than a human-centric narrative of social class, gambling and political power. Rather, it is a history that shaped horses and was shaped by horses. This thesis begins to write that history, thereby drawing on and engaging with a further body of literature on the history of animals.

Histories of animals

An ever-growing body of work on animals in history continues enrich our understanding of the past and challenge human-centric depictions of history.²³ Animals have served as a lens through which to examine empire and colonialism, war, transportation, urbanisation, health and disease.²⁴ Specialist journals such as

²² John Gleaves, "Enhancing the Odds: Horse Racing, Gambling and the First Anti-Doping Movement in Sport, 1889–1911," *Sport in History*, 32, no. 1 (2012): 26 – 52.

²³ Influential works include: Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989). Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate* (London: Penguin Books, 1990). Kathleen Kete, *The Beast in the Boudoir: Petkeeping in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1994). Hilda Kean, *Animal Rights: Political and Social Change in Britain since 1800* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998). Recent surveys on the historiography of animals include: Brett L. Walker, "Animals and the Intimacy of History," *History and Theory*, Theme Issue 52 (December 2013): 45-67. Joshua Specht, "Animal History after its Triumph: Unexpected Animals, Evolutionary Approaches, and the Animal Lens," *History Compass*, Vol. 14, No. 7 (2016): 326–336.

²⁴ See in particular: Eric Baratay and Elisabeth Hardouin-Fugier, *Zoo: A History of Zoological Gardens in the West* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002). Sandra Swart, *Riding High: Horses, Humans and History in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2010). Graham Winton, *Theirs Not to Reason Why': Horsing the British Army 1875 - 1925* (Solihull: Helion and Company, 2013). Ann Norton Greene, *Horses at*

Animals & Society and *Anthrozoos* are exemplary of the interdisciplinary nature of much of animal history, and animal studies more generally. While animals have provided historians with a lens through which to explore well-trodden aspects of history in innovative ways, they have also enabled historians to examine animals as active subjects and shapers of history, instead of merely passive products of it. Referencing Levis Strauss, Donna Haraway reminds us, animals are ‘not here just to think with. They are here to live with.’²⁵

Ritvo’s work on the interactions between humans and animals during the 19th century uses animal breeding practices to show how wealthy owners used prized animals to reinforce traditional orders and show the superior nature of the “well-bred.” Through researching rabies and the animal protection movement in the 19th century, Ritvo shows how ideas of human responsibility for animal cruelty and the creation of a panic around rabies contained ideas of national identity as well as public health and hygiene. Zoos and the hunting of wild animals serve as a backdrop for exploring the concepts of human authority and empire.²⁶ Of particular interest to the study of horses in history, Ritvo explains that, ‘The best animals were those that displayed the qualities of an industrious, docile, and willing human servant; the worst not only declined to serve, but dared to challenge human supremacy.’²⁷ Animals that resisted human wishes, therefore, were thought to ‘rebel against the divine order.’²⁸ The expectation that horses would do what humans wanted them to do (and what many believed God had created them to do) was widespread throughout the 19th century.²⁹

Work: Harnessing Power in Industrial America (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2008). N. Pemberton and M. Worboys, *Rabies in Britain: Dogs, Disease and Culture, 1830 – 2000* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

²⁵ Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003), 5.

²⁶ Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate* (London: Penguin Books, 1990)

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁹ Harriet Ritvo, “Learning from Animals: Natural History for Children in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *Children's Literature*, 13 (1985): 80 - 81

Whether for labour or for sport and leisure, humans needed to communicate with horses in some way if they were going to be able to get horses to do what they wanted. In her study of horses in colonial Africa, Swart points out that this required people to speak a 'horse-human patois' of vocal cues, human-body signals and equine behaviour signals.³⁰ As Miele explains,

‘Victorians believed that even though horses could not understand human language, the animals could determine well enough what was required of them by the signals they were given in human language. Horses would have been trained to respond to different signals in different ways, of course.... human language could communicate feelings to a horse, as well as foster or break down relationships.’³¹

Despite human expectations that horses would serve humans, humans also needed to have a rudimentary grasp of equine behaviour and be able to communicate effectively with horses; this communication could only work if horses were trained to respond to human signals. Co-existing with horses, therefore, required a two-way dialogue in 'horse-human patois'. Thus, when faced with a horse, the viewer, rider or handler could choose to read the physical body of the horse for functionality or expressions of senses and emotions.

While Swart and Miele have demonstrated the necessity of human-horse communication within specific historical contexts, other authors have examined how human reliance upon the horse, which grew during the 19th century. As F.M.L. Thompson's pioneering article *Nineteenth-Century Horse Sense* reveals, horses played a crucial role in society during the 19th century. The railways, rather than reducing the need for equine labour, increased Britain's reliance upon

³⁰ Sandra Swart, "The World the Horses Made": A South African Case Study of Writing Animals into Social History," *International Review of Social History*, 55, no. 2 (2010): 244 – 245.

³¹ Kathryn Miele, "Horse-Sense: Understanding the Working Horse in Victorian London," *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 2009, 37, no. 1 (2009): 132.

horses, and the equine population grew to over three million by the turn of the 20th century.³²

In an American context, Norton Greene and McShane and Tarr's studies have both explored the horse as a living machine. McShane and Tarr criticise historians' emphasis of the steam engine at the expense of ignoring the importance of the horse to America in the 19th century. Approaching the topic of urban horses as others researched urban human populations, they explore the contradictory idea of the living machine, its rural to urban migration, feeding, housing, health, working life and the way the humans who relied on the horse regarded it. They conclude that these 'equine machines' shaped the urban landscape and labelled the nineteenth century as 'the golden age of the horse'.³³

Norton Greene shows that horses were living machines that shaped both cities and rural infrastructure, around which devices and machinery were built to improve the horse's efficiency. To prove this, she examines how formalized breeding programs created specific types of horses which suited various purposes (large, strong horses for pulling heavy loads) and pointed out that steam engines, rather than making the horse obsolete 'technology', actually increased its importance and prevalence in America during the 19th century. She also shows that studies of equine locomotion and efficient haulage were clearly situated in the field of engineering; equine efficiency was a science.³⁴ Yet, while making a noteworthy contribution to the study of animals in history, such a horse-as-machine analysis entirely contradicts Swart and Miele's observations, and completely ignores horses as sentient beings. On a fundamental level, a machine behaves reliably the same, and interacting with one does not result in a two-way dialogue between two living beings of different species.³⁵

³² F. M. L. Thompson, "Nineteenth-Century Horse Sense," *The Economic History Review*, 29, no. 1 (1976): 60 - 81.

³³ Clay McShane and Joel Tarr, *The Horse in the City: Living Machines in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007)

³⁴ Ann Norton Greene, *Horses at Work* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008)

³⁵ Recent research into equine behaviour shows the two-way communication that takes place between humans and horses. See: R Malavasi and L Huber, "Evidence of

In Mitsuda's thesis on the decline of horsemanship in Europe between 1550 to 1900, he takes umbrage at historians who have referenced the horse's importance but never attempt to understand it.³⁶ However, he fails to examine the agency of horses and the specificities of human-horse relationships, and instead relegates the horse to a passive participant in human history. Perhaps the most valuable point to take from Mitsuda's study is an observation he makes in his introduction: 'It should be possible to ask, with reference to horse racing as a historical phenomenon, an alternative set of questions, which allow the 'visibility' of the horse to remain.'³⁷ By foregrounding these issues, this thesis provides a new historical perspective on human-horse relationships in 19th century England.

Although Donna Landry's ground-breaking cultural study of the horse in Early Modern England does not extend to horse-racing in the 19th century, her work is inspirational and indicates what can be gained from an animal-history approach towards horse racing in the 19th century. In her study, Landry explores the ideas of nobility and 'Englishness' that the Thoroughbred came to represent by the late 18th century, even though the foundation sires of the Thoroughbred were imported from the Middle East in the late 17th and 18th century. Landry positions herself between cultural history and animal studies, and shows that, far from being minority actors, horses played a central role within history. Landry explores how a particular way of riding a horse evolved largely through hunting and racing, and came to be seen as a national style, which sits in stark contrast with Mitsuda's assertions of the downfall of horsemanship. She also draws

heterospecific referential communication from domestic horses (*Equus caballus*) to humans," *Animal Cognition*, 19, no. 5 (2016): 899 – 909; Amy Victoria Smith, et. al, "Functionally relevant responses to human facial expressions of emotion in the domestic horse (*Equus caballus*)," *Biology Letters*, 12, no. 2 (2016): accessed online March 18, 2016 <http://rsbl.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/roybiolett/12/2/20150907.full.pdf>

³⁶ Tatsuya Mitsuda, *The Horse in European History, 1550-1900* (Cambridge University D.Phil thesis, 2007)

³⁷ Mitsuda, *The Horse in European History*, 9.

heavily on visual depictions of horses as well as relevant literature, both fiction and non-fiction to show the literal as well as symbolic role the Thoroughbred horse played for its human actors, and how it began as an 'Eastern' horse and transformed into a superior 'British' being.³⁸

Further insight into the materiality of the horse is provided by research into the history of animal health care and veterinary medicine, and the human interventions that were applied to maximize equine performance. Louise Hill Curth has shown how a medical marketplace existed for animal health care, which encompassed knowledgeable medical farriers and animal healers, long before the formal establishment of veterinary colleges in the late 18th century.³⁹ Her research also demonstrates the importance of humoralism to equine medical care in the early modern period. She states that the concept of balance or imbalance within the equine body were primary indicators of the health of the horse, which could be determined by the animal's 'humoral 'constitution' or 'complexion'... in addition to information about its place of origin, its age, living conditions, working patters and so on.'⁴⁰ This brings us back to Mewett's work on the correlation between racehorse and human athlete training in 18th century Britain, which showed how humoral theory influenced equine and human athlete training alike.⁴¹

Just as Landry showed how horses of Eastern origins transformed horsemanship in England, MacKay's doctoral thesis demonstrates how these 'elite horses' also

³⁸ Donna Landry, *Noble Brutes, How Eastern Horses Transformed English Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

³⁹ Louise Hill Curth, *The Care of Brute Beasts: A Social and Cultural Study of Veterinary Medicine in Early Modern England* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010).

⁴⁰ Louise Hill Curth, "'The Most Excellent of Animal Creatures': Health care for Horses in Early Modern England," in *The Horse as Cultural Icon: The Real and the Symbolic Horse in the Early Modern World*, ed. Peter Edwards, Karl A. E. Enenkel and Elspeth Graham (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 220.

⁴¹ Peter G. Mewett, "From Horses to Humans: Species Crossovers in the Origin of Modern Sports Training," *Sport History Review*, 33, no. 2 (2002): 95 -120.

played a critical role in the development of equine medical care. He shows how, during the 18th century, elite medical farriers ‘developed new and significant ideas about health and disease’ which predated the formal establishment of the Royal Veterinary College in 1791.⁴² Unfortunately, the healthcare of these elite horses in the 19th century has received almost no attention from historians, and what we do know has to be gleaned from sources which do not specifically focus on racehorses or pleasure horses. The establishment of the veterinary profession did not mean that everyone who provided equine health care suddenly was a formally educated veterinary surgeon. Woods and Mathews have shown that a significant percentage of veterinary surgeons practicing up until the 1880s were unqualified, and that ‘there is little evidence that society at large assumed that qualified vets were more expert than their unqualified counterparts.’⁴³ Indeed, most equine health problems were dealt with by those who owned and trained horses, and not expert consultants. As the architectural historian Giles Worsley has shown, the ‘19th century obsession with stable hygiene... in particular ventilation and drainage’ became focal concerns for 19th century writers on stable design.⁴⁴ Reading these sources in the context of MacKay’s findings, it becomes apparent that many of these different issues might have had an impact on racehorse management. Therefore, this thesis will examine the issues of animal health and disease as they relate to horse racing in 19th century England.

A connected issue that gained greater prominence in the 19th century was the wellbeing of horses, and how to protect them (along with other domesticated animals) from human-inflicted cruelty. In her landmark work on animals in

⁴² Michael Hubbard MacKay, *The Rise of a Medical Specialty: The Medicalisation of Elite Equine Care c. 1680 – 1800* (PhD Thesis: University of York, 2009), 334.

⁴³ Abigail Woods and Stephen Matthews, “‘Little, if at all, Removed from the Illiterate Farrier or Cow-leech’: The English Veterinary Surgeon, c.1860–1885, and the Campaign for Veterinary Reform,” *Medical History*, 54, no. 1 (2010): 33 – 39, 44.

⁴⁴ Giles Worsley, *The Design and Development of the Stable and Riding House in Great Britain from the 13th century to 1914* (PhD Thesis: Courtauld Institute of Art, 1989), 138 – 139.

British Art, Diana Donald shows how changing sensibilities towards animals from the late 18th century onward resulted in a symbiosis between depictions of animals in art and culture, and human perceptions of animals and their behaviour towards them. Of particular interest to the history of horse racing, she shows that the legendary match race between the horses Hambletonian and Diamond in 1799 was tainted by allegations of cruelty towards both animals, who were heavily whipped and spurred. She finds evidence of tension between the ‘real’ racehorse and an imagined ideal of the sport; late 18th century animal painters recorded idyllic landscapes of peaceful horses in their pastures which, she concludes, existed as ‘a counterpoint and a solace to those spectators who were anxiously aware of growing protests against the actual treatment of racers at this time.’⁴⁵

Susan Nance’s exploration of human-constructed narratives surrounding racehorses in 19th and early 20th century America, reaches a somewhat more nuanced conclusion than Donald, however.⁴⁶ ‘Selective breeding and training,’ she explains, ‘singled out individual horses who ran faster when whipped and spurred, persevered when fatigued or in pain, and obeyed the jockey and measured his energy as a way of taking direction. Such crafted creatures were perceived as loyal and eager competitors.’⁴⁷ These characteristics, frequently described as ‘gameness,’ were highly prized, and a racehorse which possessed these traits ‘was no herd or prey animal but rather an individual with ambition...’⁴⁸ As Ritvo observes, the RSPCA did not prosecute the owners or riders of horses mistreated or killed in steeplechases, despite the Society’s public admonition of the sport, and Nance’s analysis brings to the foreground one possible reason why the RSPCA did not pursue allegations of animal cruelty in

⁴⁵ Diana Donald, *Picturing Animals in Britain* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 122-123.

⁴⁶ Susan Nance, “Game Stallions and Other ‘Horseface Minstrelsies’ of the American Turf,” *Theatre Journal*, 65, no. 3 (2013): 355 – 372.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 360.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 368.

jump-racing in a court of law.⁴⁹ Furthermore, as Allyson May explains, one crucial aspect of fox hunting's transformation in the 19th century into a 'school of manly virtues,' was a gradual change in the attitudes towards how horses were to be ridden and cared for during and after the hunt; although severe and sometimes fatal accidents to horses were regarded as an inevitable occurrence when hunting, riding horses to exhaustion or even death ceased to be socially acceptable.⁵⁰ Thus, while concerns for the treatment of animals were gradually established as marks of respectability, and cruelty towards them as a sign of human deviance, a 'respectable' individual could have consideration for how a horse was treated while simultaneously putting it at risk of injury or death.

Susan Nance's analysis of how racehorses were understood by humans shows the complexities in ascribing the wider societal changes brought about by the growth of humanitarianism and animal protection to horse racing. Selective breeding practices, sporting narratives and anthropomorphic interpretations of equine behaviour resulted in the normalisation of what might constitute animal cruelty in other circumstances (e.g. whipping or spurring a tired horse). It is interesting to compare Nance's deconstruction of 'game' racehorses with Tosh's work on Victorian masculinities, which suggests a considerable overlap between desirable racehorse and human characteristics.⁵¹ As Cassidy observes, 'Horse racing was the reflection of the essential character of the Englishman... This vision included fair play, muscular athleticism, determination and beauty.'⁵²

From these findings alone, it is evident that human perceptions of animals and their actions toward them have been impacting upon Thoroughbred racehorses right up until the present day. Yet, histories of animals and histories of horse

⁴⁹ Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 134.

⁵⁰ Allyson N. May, *The Fox-Hunting Controversy, 1781 - 2004: Class and Cruelty* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 64 – 67.

⁵¹ John Tosh, "Gentlemanly Politeness and Manly Simplicity in Victorian England," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002): 455-472.

⁵² Rebecca Cassidy, "Introduction" in *The Cambridge Companion to Horse racing*, ed. Rebecca Cassidy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3.

racings seem to exist separately, and few attempts have been made to combine them; Landry's work is a rare exception; what might an equine-centric history of horse racing look like, and to what extent might it enrich or challenge the existing narratives?

Towards a horse-centric history of horse racing

By making racehorses the focus of historical analysis, this thesis is primarily concerned with the material horse, and not merely its symbolic and metaphorical meanings. This is not to say there is no place for metaphorical horses in history, but it is easy to lose sight of the day-to-day experiences of co-existing with animals in favour of more elaborate encounters and reimaginings. However, such an approach to the history of horse racing necessarily raises methodological questions.

Writing histories of animals is unavoidably problematic, primarily because historical animals left scant records of themselves. Erica Fudge goes to the heart of this problem in her essay on writing the history of animals when she states that, 'if our only access to animals in the past is through documents written by humans, then we are never looking at the animals, only ever at the representation of the animals by humans.'⁵³ Yet, by highlighting the holistic histories written by Ritvo and Kete in particular, she explains that,

'the inevitable centrality of the human in the history of animals— the reliance upon documents created by humans— need not be regarded as failing, because if a history of animals is to be distinctive it must offer us what we might call an 'interspecies competence'; that is, a new way of thinking about and living with animals. Holistic history, in its redrawing of the human, offers us a way of achieving this.'⁵⁴

⁵³ Erica Fudge, "A left-handed blow: writing the history of animals," in *Representing Animals*, ed. Nigel Rothfels (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

This is echoed by Miele when she asks, ‘Is it not just as interesting— and important— to consider the ways in which humans have identified with animals as animals?’⁵⁵ Thus, while recognising the reliance upon human-generated records, the goal remains of illuminating the co-existence of humans with animals, and demonstrating what this contributes to the existing human-centric historiographical discourse.

Coming from a museum background, I was keen to consult as wide a range of sources as possible for this thesis because I value using objects other than text-based sources to bring a historical narrative to life. Writing an animal history of horse-racing also lends itself to engaging with material culture, because setting foot on sites of past human-horse interaction, or seeing it depicted in a painting or photograph, can provide a unique insight which goes beyond that which was recorded in words. Although this thesis relies heavily on text-based sources such as racehorse training manuals, veterinary manuals and journals, sporting periodicals, newspapers and sporting literature from the 19th and early 20th century, I have sought out artworks and illustrations related to horse racing, and visited surviving racing stables from the period because they provide a sensory way to explore the history of horse racing that text-based sources do not. Furthermore, taxidermy and other racehorse remains provide the opportunity to come into contact with parts of the physical bodies of long-deceased racehorses, which turn equine remains into historical sources, thereby opening up new ways to engage with the sport of horse racing in 19th and early 20th century that places the animal at its core.

No source material is perfect or unbiased, however, and so, while racehorse training manuals and trainers’ memoirs provide the most concentrated source of information about human-racehorse relationships, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that many were written so that trainers could raise their public profile or rehabilitate a tarnished image. As a result, many may gloss over that which the trainer did not wish to make public— whether that was ‘tricks of the trade,’

⁵⁵ Miele, “Horse-Sense,” 129.

sporting failures, or unsavoury practices. Additionally, just as famous trainers and famous (often wealthy) racehorse owners of the period are overly represented within sources, so too are famous racehorses. Someone, somewhere, decided whether or not to record or keep a record, and then, for more than a century, someone has had to decide whether that object warranted the space and financial cost of preserving it so that it could be viewed and consulted, and that process has overwhelmingly prioritised the well-known and well-to-do, over the middling trainer and also-ran horse. As Kean points out, ‘most working in the field of animal studies would not dispute that (at least certain) animals have past lives. Whether past lives become ‘historical’ lives depends not on the subjects themselves—be these animals or humans—but on those writing about them who then choose to construct a history.’⁵⁶ Yet, being able to write about these historical animal lives relies upon those sources being preserved in the first place. Thus, it is impossible for the historian of animals to construct a history of animals if those potential sources have not been recorded or preserved.

A further problem of writing a history of horse racing which foregrounds the horse is that equestrian texts can often be impenetrable, filled as they are with equestrian ‘dialect’ and an assumed knowledge of horses. As Raber and Tucker remark, ‘To write anything intelligent on the subject of the horse, it is often necessary to combine training in the academic professions with training in, or at least substantial exposure to, the arts and nuances of horsemanship...’⁵⁷ For this reason, I find it necessary to point out that throughout this thesis, there is often an unreferenced source: the horses I have had the pleasure of interacting with over the years. They reminded me of where to look, what to look for, and how to read a one-hundred or more-year-old text to extract the horses from within it. There is a strange sense of continuity when reading a long-deceased person’s account of interacting with a horse and recognising the similarities between an occurrence in

⁵⁶ Hilda Kean, “Challenges for Historians Writing Animal-Human History: What is Really Enough?” *Anthrozoos*, 25, Supplement (2012): 59 – 60.

⁵⁷ Karen Raber and Trave J. Tucker, “Introduction,” in *The Culture of the Horse: Status, Discipline, and Identity in the Early Modern World*, eds. Karen Raber and Treva J. Tucker (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 2.

one's own lifetime. While remaining aware of the historical specificities of the historical human-horse relationship, it becomes impossible to abstractify the historical animal from a living one today.

In the introduction to her anthropological study of horse racing in Newmarket, Rebecca Cassidy observes, 'In relation to racing society, the racehorse is an ambivalent creature. Not animal, not person, not object, not subject, not entirely artificial and not entirely natural... Racing society does not recognise an absolute boundary between humans and other animals.'⁵⁸ Later, when examining human-horse relations in detail, she states, 'In Newmarket, animals are sometimes used to stand for humans, whilst they are sometimes distanced from humans as a subordinate species in a hierarchical relationship with man.'⁵⁹ I kept coming back to these ideas again and again, which I found reflected in the 19th century human-racehorse interactions I uncovered in libraries, archives, museums and private collections as well, and these themes pervade much of this thesis. Thus, this thesis aims to create a four-legged, whinnying companion to *Huggins' Flat Racing and British Society* which recognises the role of the racehorse within the historical narrative. While Huggins followed the people, this thesis follows the racehorses and the people who interacted with them during that time period.

In chapter one, I explore the different ways racehorses were understood by humans between 1800 - 1920. I show that Thoroughbred racehorses occupied a paradoxical space during the 19th century; prized as equine athletes, financial assets and national icons, they were also perceived by many to be gradually deteriorating throughout the 19th century. Significant changes in horse racing, which caused much younger horses to be raced over shorter distances, and a reduction in the number of years most racehorses spent in training, led a number of influential figures to question the quality of the Thoroughbred horse this new system of horse racing was encouraging. Decades of national debate ensued,

⁵⁸ Rebecca Cassidy, *An Anthropological Study of Horseracing in Newmarket* (PhD Thesis: University of Edinburgh, 1999), 30.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 175

which were never entirely resolved. Although each racehorse was understood as an individual whose behaviour was carefully observed, collectively, racehorses were expected to demonstrate that they participated willingly in the sport.

Having set the scene of human-racehorse interaction in the previous chapter, in Chapter Two I focus on racehorse training methods, and how these changed during the 19th century. I reveal that turning a Thoroughbred horse into an equine athlete necessitated a complex training regime, which was heavily influenced by humoral theory. Just as trainers modified the equine body with their training techniques, racehorses themselves also influenced trainers and training methods. The horse's body was a vital indicator of health and condition, and likely future performance at a race. Simultaneously, the horse's body placed limitations upon the training regime. The growing popularity of racing younger horses over short distances caused trainers to adapt already established training methods to suit these younger horses, and shorter time-window for training which these races enforced. Racehorse trainers were also receptive to experimenting with new training techniques if they perceived a potential benefit. If experimental methods were found to provide little benefit or have an adverse effect on the horse, however, they were quickly abandoned. Successful racehorse training required meeting the new conditions being set by the sport, while at the same time factoring in the possibilities and limitations set by each horse's physical being.

In Chapter Three I demonstrate the interrelationship between racehorse feeding and housing. The artificial way racehorses were fed and housed meant that they were regarded as being more liable to disease than horses kept in 'a state of nature'. As a result, racehorse trainers engaged in a difficult balancing act to ensure each animal in their care remained healthy and reached peak condition. While previously trainers had relied upon an annual run at grass to restore their horses' health, time constraints on training schedules caused trainers to keep horses permanently in stables and feed them grass and succulents indoors at regular intervals. Coinciding with this change in feeding practice, loose boxes, which had originally been used for housing ill or recuperating horses, grew in popularity as year-round racehorse housing. Stable designs were influenced by

equine health and equine behaviour, demonstrating that both humans and racehorses shaped stable design.

In Chapter Four, I analyse the complex relationship between racehorse healthcare and performance. Veterinary surgeons established themselves in Newmarket in the early 19th century. Yet, the relationship between racehorse trainers and veterinary medicine was not unproblematic. Racehorse trainers possessed in-depth knowledge of each of their horses' constitutions— knowledge which was considered vital to successful preventive healthcare and treatment of illness. Common treatments for lameness and disease could easily be administered by the trainer himself, which meant that outside expertise was not always necessary. Furthermore, veterinary surgeons could not always cure the ailments which plagued racehorses, and the time constraints under which trainers were working— especially horses' future racing engagements— meant that innovative veterinary treatments were not always viable. While racehorse trainers and owners invested heavily in preventive measures, the sport required 'quick-fix' solutions to lameness and disease, instead of lengthy cures and rehabilitation, and veterinary medicine could not necessarily deliver this.

In Chapter Five I position farriery and hoof-care in the context of the animal protection and anti-cruelty campaigns of the 19th century, and the development of the veterinary profession. By showing how fears about damaging and ineffective horse shoeing and hoof care were harnessed by veterinary surgeons, horse-shoe manufacturers and farriery reform campaigners and unshod-hoof advocates, this chapter highlights how animal protection discourse and empathy for animal pain could be used to sell new products, drive education reform, improve professional and social standing, and encourage experimentation. Furthermore, this chapter finds urban working horses at the centre of farriery and hoof-care reform, experimentation and innovation in the 19th century; racehorse farriery followed trends, rather than driving innovation.

Lastly, inspired by the growing number of works on taxidermy and animal death, in Chapter Six I engage with the death and memorialisation of racehorses. Viewing racehorse graves, skeletons and taxidermy in the context of the

widespread racehorse-fallen-on-hard-times narrative of the late 18th and 19th century, I show how memorialisation practices functioned as a counter narrative which allowed humans to demonstrate their compassion for animals, while simultaneously creating places and material animal-things for reminiscence. By using the afterlives of two famous racehorses—Persimmon and St. Simon—as case studies to demonstrate how humans continued to interact with the bodies of racehorses after the animals had died, the ways in which different parts of the same racehorse’s body could have a variety of meanings and resting places becomes apparent, showcasing the complexity of death culture which encompassed highly valued racehorses in the 19th and early 20th century.

1. Understanding the Racehorse— breed perceptions and individualised encounters

‘Men rarely speak of us as we are, their judgments being generally warped by hopes and fears. Some thought me “a Derby horse all over;” others, that “I was not drawn fine enough.” One considered me “not half prepared;” another, “fit as a fiddle.” ... Another held, “I was a picture of a racehorse.”’

– John Mills, *The Life of a Racehorse*¹

Visit the racing town of Newmarket early one morning today, and you will find a place teeming with racehorses. Everywhere you go, you encounter horses walking along the streets, or up on the gallops taking their morning exercise. Some horses move along amicably, while others fret or shy at something, which causes a ripple effect among the other horses, generating a nervous mass of muscles and clattering hooves. If you then examine sporting paintings and prints, you might see similar sights captured 150 or more years ago, of Newmarket Heath full of horses with men on their backs, all taking their exercise. Occasionally in such paintings, you will see a horse that has bolted or freed itself of its rider and is hurtling across the great expanse of green. There are clear parallels, therefore, between the racehorses one sees today, and racehorses of long ago. But, while there are numerous studies of contemporary racehorse behaviour, the historic racehorse remains essentially a mystery. Who were these animals, and how did humans understand them?

The Thoroughbred horse has been the focus of a number of studies. Margaret Derry, who has written extensively on the history of animal breeding, explains that cross-breeding Eastern horses (which had been selectively bred in their country of origin) with native English ones (which had not) in the 18th century

¹ John Mills, *The Life of a Racehorse* (London: Ward and Lock, 1861), 65 – 66.

had a profound impact on how the offspring of these horses looked, which led breeders to speculate that purity of type or breed resulted in a greater potency to transmit characteristics. Such horses were said to be ‘thoroughly bred’— hence the Thoroughbred horse.²

The idea of keeping records of horse breeding was imported to England with these Eastern horses. Racehorse breeders, concentrated primarily in and around Yorkshire, started keeping their own private breeding records. It was the General Stud Book, formally established by J. Weatherby & Sons in 1791, which established the Thoroughbred horse as a distinct breed with a traceable pedigree— although the term ‘Thoroughbred’ would not come into use until the early 19th century. An obligatory attribute of Thoroughbreds in the 19th century, as today, was a traceable pedigree back to a small number of foundation sires. As Richard Nash has pointed out, these foundation sires were retroactively important; they were not imported with the specific purpose of creating new racehorses, let alone a new breed, but rather to improve the nation’s horses more generally. Pedigrees recorded in the General Studbook gradually cemented the importance of these foundation sires into the narrative of the Thoroughbred horse.³ Anthropologist Rebecca Cassidy concludes that this pedigree narrative, however, ‘produces an idea of the Thoroughbred as a mythical beast, created not born, reproducing a-sexually and thereby preserving male attributes directly

² Margaret Derry, *Masterminding Nature: The Breeding of Animals, 1750 – 2010* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 14 – 17.

³ Richard Nash, “‘Honest English Breed’: The Thoroughbred as Cultural Metaphor,” in *The Culture of the Horse: Status, Discipline and Identity in the Early Modern World*, ed. Karen Raber and Treva J. Tucker (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 243 – 272. Richard Nash, “‘Beware a Bastard Breed’: Notes Towards a Revisionist History of the Thoroughbred Racehorse,” in *The Horse as Cultural Icon: The Real and the Symbolic Horse in the Early Modern World*, eds. Peter Edwards, Karl A. E. Enenklel and Elspeth Graham (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 191 - 193.

without the dilution or perhaps pollution introduced by a (female) mate.’⁴ Derry states, ‘The legacy of the Thoroughbred for all future breeding would be an allegiance to recording pedigrees and the belief that pedigree labelled animals as pure. Neither, ultimately, related to actual breeding methods.’⁵

The Thoroughbred was more than just a malleable animal defined by pedigree and breeding, however. Donna Landry has shown that, between 1650 and 1800, Thoroughbred horses, which stemmed from imported horses of Eastern origin, came to be regarded as decidedly English animals, which shaped the nation’s equestrian style, and values and culture more broadly. She concludes that, by the 19th century, ‘the English Thoroughbred had become a microcosm of all that was splendid and British, an imperial icon.’⁶ Nash, meanwhile, has likened the Thoroughbred horse to ‘a stabilising ‘natural’ trope of English empire.’⁷ These findings mirror work by Ritvo on pedigree dogs and cattle, both of which emphasised the importance of a traceable ancestry to purity of type; ‘Well-bred animals had always served a symbolic or metaphorical function, representing the position of their owners.’⁸

As Huggins shows, during the 19th century, Thoroughbred breeding transformed into an industry, which was practiced by wealthy, often aristocratic landowners, commercial breeders, and racehorse trainers. While at the turn of the century, the majority of wealthy breeders intended to race their own stock, ‘by the end of the

⁴ Rebecca Cassidy, “Arborescent Culture- Writing and Not Writing Racehorse Pedigrees,” in *Kinship and Beyond: The Genealogical Model Reconsidered*, eds. Sandra C. Bamford and James Leach (New York and Oxford: Berghan Books, 2009), 35.

⁵ Margaret Derry, *Masterminding Nature*, 16.

⁶ Donna Landry, *Noble Brutes: How Eastern Horses Transformed English Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 140.

⁷ Richard Nash, “Animal Nomenclature: Facing Other Animals,” in *Humans and Other Animals in Eighteenth-Century British Culture: Representation, Hybridity, Ethics*, ed. Frank Palmeri (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited: Aldershot, 2006), 101 – 118.

⁸ Harriet Ritvo, “Pride and Pedigree: The Evolution of the Victorian Dog Fancy,” *Victorian Studies*, 29, no. 2 (Winter, 1986): 243.

19th century, nine-tenths of Thoroughbreds were bred for sale.’⁹ Between 1822 and 1900, the number of Thoroughbred broodmares registered in the General Stud Book increased exponentially, from 735 to 58,900. During this time period, the way in which racehorses exchanged hands also changed, as sales at auction overtook sale by private treaty.¹⁰

Yet little attention has been given to a significant equine controversy of the 19th century: was the Thoroughbred horse deteriorating? Joyce Kay’s work on the decline of the Royal Plates (long distance races subsidised by the public purse) highlights how the growing popularity of sprint-racing for younger horses changed the significance of Royal Plates, so that they came to represent races intended to promote a stouter racehorse with more stamina. She shows how concerns about the possible decline of the Thoroughbred horse, and falling numbers of runners in the Royal Plates, resulted in racing officials reducing the number of Royal Plates in the 1870s and 80s to ensure higher prize moneys and encourage better competition. Yet, she concludes, these measures were insufficient, and the Royal Plates were eventually disbanded in the 1880s, due to the dwindling number of entrants and the sheer dominance of two and three-year old racing in Britain by this time.¹¹

In Tatsuya Mitsuda’s article on the debate surrounding the decline of the Thoroughbred during the 19th century, he concludes that those expressing concerns about the Thoroughbred’s potential decline were nostalgic for the days when the landed gentry had practiced racing and Thoroughbred breeding as a pastime for the benefit of the nation, rather than an industry supported by a growing number of commercial breeders and for-profit owners. By the end of the 19th century, shorter races for younger horses had made long-distance races for

⁹ Mike Huggins, “Thoroughbred Breeding in the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire in the Nineteenth Century,” *The Agricultural History Review*, 42, no. 2 (1994): 117.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 119. Mike Huggins, *Flat Racing and British Society, 1790 – 1914: a Social and Economic History* (Abingdon: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), 162.

¹¹ Joyce Kay, “Closing the Stable Door and the Public Purse: The Rise and Fall of the Royal Plates,” *The Sports Historian*, 20, no. 1 (2000): 18-32.

older horses obsolete, and, according to Mitsuda, impossible to change, because changes to the public perception of animal cruelty would have made a return to long-distance races unpalatable.¹² While Mitsuda is not incorrect in his assertion that racing and breeding changed into an industry during the 19th century, he glosses over many of the serious animal protection concerns which people expressed— not about long-distance racing—but about two and three-year old racing over shorter distances, and the fact that the duration of time racehorses spent in training had decreased significantly as the popularity of long-distance racing declined. He, therefore, vastly oversimplifies the controversy, relegating it to class anxiety, and nostalgia for the Arabian horse which had not been tarnished by commerce like the Thoroughbred.

Co-existing with horses involved more than just comprehending them as a collective, however. Miele, in her study of how urban working horses were understood, concludes that, ‘the whole of the nineteenth century abounds with literature that specifically discussed the virtues and vices of horses.’ Humans ‘read’ horses by looking at them and also by touching their bodies; human actions had the power to physically alter horses.¹³ How horses behaved and the ways in which their behaviours were understood are also widely represented in equestrian and sporting texts, and were observed by artists as well.¹⁴ The late 19th century was also a period when animal behaviour drew the attention of scientists, in particular Charles Darwin, Lloyd Morgan and George J. Romanes. As Costall observes, there were differing approaches to understanding animal behaviour; while Darwin favoured observed behaviours and anecdotal evidence, Morgan

¹² Tatsuya Mitsuda, “The Deterioration of the Thoroughbred in Late Nineteenth-Century England,” *The Hiyoshi review of English Studies*, no.55 (2009): 33- 68.

¹³ Kathryn Miele, “Horse-Sense: Understanding the Working Horse in Victorian London,” *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 37, no. 1 (2009): 129–140.

¹⁴ J. F. Herring snr.’s series *Stable Scenes* (1846) and *The British Stud* (1849) are prime examples of this. They show racehorses being saddled, and at liberty in fields. Horses rear, pin their ears, raise forelegs, sniff one another, and quite possibly squeal. They are evidently the work of someone who has paid close attention to what horses ‘do’.

relied on experiment, and therefore detachment from the animals he was studying.¹⁵

Yet, although the anthropomorphised racehorse regularly gallops across the page and screen in equine biographies today, how individual horses were understood by humans who came into contact with them and worked with them has rarely been the focus of histories of horse racing. Wade points out that, ‘the moral concern expressed for animals used in sport is at best only a tiny fraction of the concern displayed for the effects of sports on human interests,’ which perhaps goes some way to explain academic sports history’s own human-centric approach to racing, in which humans are the sole drivers of change.¹⁶ There is little doubt, however, that the most important residents of training stables were the horses themselves, around whom every trainer, head lad and stable lad’s life revolved. At the race itself, it was the horse, and to a lesser extent the jockey, who captured people’s attention. The racehorse was at the very centre of the sport.

Research by Day, Carpenter and Mewett has shown that racehorse training methods influenced how human athletes were trained in the 18th and 19th century.¹⁷ These findings beg the question whether there were other crossovers between human athletes and racehorses, especially regarding the characteristics they were expected to possess. Sports historian Roberta J. Park, writing in the context of human athletes in the 19th and early 20th century, has found that ‘the ideal Victorian athlete embodied strength, fortitude, tenacity, courage, and something tantamount to moral rectitude.’ She also notes that these

¹⁵ Alan Costall, “Lloyd Morgan, and the Rise and Fall of Animal Psychology,” *Society and Animals*, 6, no. 1 (1998): 13 – 29.

¹⁶ Maurice L. Wade, “Sports and Speciesism,” *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 23, no. 1, (1996): 10.

¹⁷ Dave Day & Tegan Carpenter, *A History of Sports Coaching in Britain: Overcoming Amateurism*, (London: Routledge, 2015) (e-book version. p. 20-53). Peter G. Mewett, “From Horses to Humans: Species Crossovers in the Origin of Modern Sports Training,” *Sport History Review*, 33, no. 2 (2002): 95 – 120.

characteristics were linked with ideas of guarding the nation's Empire, and that each individual athlete, as a model of British-ness, 'represented the future of the "race"'.¹⁸ Her conclusions are particularly interesting when considered in context with Landry's findings that the Thoroughbred horse influenced English values and culture; was the Thoroughbred racehorse expected to embody the same behavioural characteristics and values as a human athlete?

Ritvo's work on the cultural history of animals in the 19th century concludes that 'good' domestic animals were appreciated for their kindness and willingness to serve humans, and in some cases might be regarded as wise or intelligent.¹⁹ There was a catch to this, however, because uncooperative domestic animals that rebelled against human will were regarded as 'bad creatures' that inverted the ordained relationship of the animal as a servant.²⁰ Human perceptions of domesticated animals, including horses, therefore depended upon the extent to which an individual animal fulfilled human wishes. Other histories of horses, in particular McShane & Tarr and Greene's works have both reduced working horses to living machines, which had specific needs, performed specific functions, and shaped technology and infrastructure.²¹ These analogies, although understandable, ring false, especially considering Ritvo's findings that humans perceived 'rebellious' animals differently from 'co-operative' ones— findings which undoubtedly show historical humans recognising equine agency. The goal

¹⁸ Roberta J. Park, "Athletes and their Training in Britain and America, 1800 - 1914," in *Sport and Exercise Science: Essays in the History of Sports Medicine*, eds. Jack W. Berryman and Roberta J. Park (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 57.

¹⁹ Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 18, 19. Harriet Ritvo, *Noble Cows and Hybrid Zebras* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 7-8.

²⁰ Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, 21 – 30.

²¹ Clay McShane and Joel A. Tarr, *The Horse in the City: Living Machines in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007). Ann Norton Greene, *Horses at Work: Harnessing Power in Industrial America* (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2008).

of this chapter, however, is not a search for fractures in the human-horse relationship. As Swart points out, ‘agency and public resistance are not synonymous and a search for agency should not be induced necessarily by the presence of heroic acts of conscious self-determination.’²²

Rejecting the horse-as-machine analogy, the ideas raised by Park, Ritvo and Landry, when viewed together, raise a number of questions about the racehorse in the 19th century. Firstly, how did humans understand racehorses as a collective? Secondly, what behavioural characteristics were racehorses expected to possess? Landry’s work does not, for example, consider horses as individuals, focusing instead on their collective meaning as a national icon, and their power to transform horsemanship and English culture more broadly. Ritvo, however, indicates that domesticated animals that rebelled against human constructs were regarded less favourably. Viewed together, Landry and Ritvo’s work suggests that the idealised Thoroughbred racehorse collective and an individual racehorse’s behaviour might not always have been the same, and that any horses which failed to live up to cultural ideals were not necessarily model Victorian athletes or servile animals.

This chapter will first consider the Thoroughbred racehorse as a collective, specifically its conceptualisation within racing as a financial asset, and a breed in decline. During the 19th century, significant changes occurred in the ages at which racehorses entered training and ran races. Racing young horses favoured the owner’s financial investment over the horse’s welfare, and resulted in successful young horses— even those which had been permanently lamed by racing— being retired to stud. In parallel with this development, public concern grew that the Thoroughbred breed was deteriorating over generations as a result. This long-running debate brought to the fore the extent to which Thoroughbred racehorses had come to be regarded as a financial asset, and highlighted the key

²² Sandra Swart, *Riding High: Horses, Humans and History in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2010), 201.

reason for this concern— the Thoroughbred's importance as a symbol of national pride.

The second section of this chapter will focus on human-racehorse encounters to show how individual racehorses were understood. In order for Thoroughbred horses to become racehorses, humans had to teach them to respond to certain cues, and accustom them to working together with humans. Not all racehorses responded alike to early training, and this sense of a racehorse being an individual also permeates descriptions of racehorses already established in training. Yet, despite this acknowledgement of individuality, all racehorses were expected to show that they were willing participants in the sport of racing, and those which failed to do so were often removed from the sport. Each Thoroughbred racehorse, therefore, was simultaneously conceptualised as part of a collective of Thoroughbreds, and as an individual animal. To remain within the sport, however, a racehorse was expected to display specific behavioural characteristics.

A deteriorating asset

Horse racing in the 19th century was changing, and some of these changes had a direct impact on the racehorse itself. So called 'heats', where horses were run in a series of races over a number of miles until one of the horses had won two races and was declared the winner, had fallen out of fashion since the 1770s. The introduction of high-value races for three-year-old horses in the 1770s caused races to skew ever more towards younger animals running over shorter distances. By the 1830s, there were only four 4-mile long races at Newmarket, and the previously run six and eight-mile races had completely disappeared from the racing schedule in the town.²³

²³ 'Nimrod', "ART. IV.-A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Race-horse," *The Quarterly Review*, 49, no. 98 (Jul 1833): 387-388.

Huggins' calculations show how the ages of horses participating in races shifted noticeably as a result. In 1817, only 10% of horses running in races were 2-year-olds; by 1859, it had grown to 35%. Similarly, where 30% of horses running races in 1817 were 5 years and older, by 1859, this had decreased to 20%, with the majority of horses running in races being two and three years of age.²⁴ By 1865, out of a total of circa 1,500 races run annually in England, only 292 races were longer than two miles.²⁵ The stout running horse that could gallop multiple four-mile heats under heavy weights was losing out to a more lucrative and exciting younger racehorse which brought a degree of uncertainty along with it.²⁶ How much more enticing to gamble one's money on such a horse... How much sooner one could see whether a racehorse was talented or not...

The racehorse was slowly being transformed into a commercial asset. Although racehorse ownership continued to enjoy popularity as a sporting pastime among Britain's nobility, affluent industrialists were widening participation in racehorse ownership. Horse auctioneers Tattersalls, established in London in the mid 18th century, catered increasingly to commercial or semi-commercial racehorse breeding establishments which needed a venue to sell their youngstock at regular times each year. During the 19th century, Tattersalls extended its auction enterprise to encompass Thoroughbred racehorse sales at Newmarket, Doncaster and on-site at privately owned studs. The price of young racehorses increased, and thus further perpetuated the shift towards training and racing young horses.²⁷

²⁴ Huggins, *Flat Racing and British Society*, 33.

²⁵ R. H. Copperthwaite, *The Turf, the Racehorse, and Stud Farm* (London: Day and Son Limited, 1865), 32-33.

²⁶ Nicholas Hankey Smith, *Observations on Breeding for the Turf* (London: G. Whittaker, 1825), v-iv.

²⁷ Theodore Andrea Cook, *A History of the English Turf*, vol. 2, (London: H. Virtue and Company, 1901-1904), 410-411. Charles Richardson, *The English Turf* (London: Methuen & Co., 1901), 270. *Selling Champions: Tattersalls at 250* (Museum Exhibition), National Heritage Centre for Horseracing & Sporting Art, October 2016 – January 2017.

In 1839, one yearling was sold for 710 guineas.²⁸ Such prices remained the exception, rather than the rule, but by the 1850s and 60s, figures indicate that yearlings were averaging between 100 and 110 guineas each, and prices were steadily increasing.²⁹ As multiple writers observed, the rising value of yearlings encouraged owners to enter their horses in races as soon as possible so that they could attempt to recuperate some of the money they had invested in the horse. It was largely a losing game, however, and high-priced yearlings which fetched over 1,000 guineas at auction between 1883 and 1892 earned, on average, less than half of the sums spent on them back in winnings.³⁰ However, a stallion which had proved successful as a racehorse and won numerous important races could earn large sums of money for its owner at stud, which was where the real earning potential of champion racehorses came into play. At Welbeck at in the 1880s and 90s, the Duke of Portland's champion sires bankrolled his entire racing enterprise; while the training establishment was always loss-making, stallions were bringing in well in excess of £10,000 annually in stud fees. In 1896, nine stallions brought in a total of £33,534.³¹

Racing stables, therefore, had a high turnover of horses each year, which only increased as the ages of racehorses trended towards younger animals, as owners sought to evaluate each horse's performance and realise their animals' earning potential as soon as possible. By 1914, a total of 3,910 horses ran in races (a little over half of the total estimated number of racehorses in training); the average age

²⁸ "Notes of the Month," *New Sporting magazine*, 17, no. 102 (Oct 1839): 283.

²⁹ "Yearling Sales," *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, June 26, 1859, 5.

"Sale of the Middle Park Yearlings," *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, June 24, 1860, 4. "York August Meeting," *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, August 26, 1860, 4. "Sales of Blood Stock at Doncaster," *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, September 22, 1861, 8.

³⁰ Charles Richardson, *The English Turf*, 273.

³¹ Duke of Portland's Racing Accounts, 1885 – 1901, Nottingham University Special Collections, P1F10/2/1/2 – 32.

of them was a little over three years old.³² The age of the Thoroughbred population in training thus, went from being a wide age spread, to horses predominantly under the age of five by the 1870s. The move toward sprint-racing younger horses over shorter distances, and the decreasing number of years Thoroughbreds were raced, constituted a seismic shift in the sport's equine population.

At the turn of the 19th century, the Thoroughbred horse represented British superiority, especially where the nation's horses were concerned. The Thoroughbred, often referred to as 'blood-horse' in early 19th century texts, was described as 'superior to any other, not only in Europe, but in the whole world,' and 'the most pure, unexceptionable, and beautiful race of Blood Horses in the universe.'³³ The veterinary surgeon William Youatt was certain that, 'The British climate and British skill made the thorough-bred horse what he is.'³⁴ Racing and racehorse ownership also held patriotic undertones; the idea persisted that horse racing was the best way to test and improve the superiority of the Thoroughbred horse (which was widely used as a cross-breed for other horses, primarily sporting, light-driving and cavalry animals), and that therefore horse racing improved horses for the sake of the nation.³⁵ As James Christie White, the author of one of the earliest histories of horse racing in Britain, proclaimed,

'For nearly a century and half, the 'Turf' has formed a favourite amusement of Kings and Lords and Commons. But it is not as an amusement only, that the sports of the turf put their claim to popularity. To the excellence of the British horse, originated and brought to perfection through the instrumentality of these sports, may be ascribed

³² The Value of Racing to the Country, 1914, Lonsdale Papers, Carlisle Record Office, D/Lons/L9/2/58.

³³ T. H. Morland, *The Genealogy of the English Race Horse* ((London: J. Barfield, 1810), vii. A. Lawson, *The Modern Farrier* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Mackenzie and Dent, 1826), 156.

³⁴ William Youatt, *The Horse* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1843), 67.

³⁵ R. W. Dickson, *Practical Agriculture; or, a Complete System of Modern Husbandry*, Vol. 2 (London: Richard Phillips, 1805), 1170.

much of our superiority over other nations, both in commerce and in war.³⁶

Racehorse breeders, owners, and other persons directly involved in horse-racing were, therefore, not merely indulging in an increasingly commercial sporting past-time, but also participating in something which benefited the country as a whole.

Despite all this patriotic bravado, the Thoroughbred's status as the pinnacle of the equine perfection was starting to come under threat due to changes in the ages of racehorses, and length of time they remained the sport. In 1855, 'Cecil', a popular sporting writer of the period, cited the fact that 'a single race, like that of the Derby, often now disables the winner from running again,' as evidence for the deterioration of Thoroughbred racehorses.³⁷ The statistics were damning: of 1,160 Thoroughbred foals born in 1851, only 280 were still in training four years later.³⁸ Although changes which had taken place in racehorse training since the late 18th century were widely heralded as positive, the training and racing of yearlings and two-year-olds was criticised by some for introducing a culture of dispensability, where young horses were quickly used up and replaced.³⁹

As a result of public discussion and debate, in 1859 the Jockey Club took measures to curb yearling races.⁴⁰ Yet, in the eyes of many, these reforms did not go far enough. The system of early racing essentially favoured the owner's financial investment over the racehorse's welfare.⁴¹ It also meant that horses

³⁶ James Christie White, *History of the British Turf*, Vol. 1 (London: Henry Colburn, 1840) vii.

³⁷ 'Cecil', "Horses Ancient and Modern," *New Sporting Magazine*, no. 179 (Nov 1855): 315.

³⁸ "The Post and the Paddock," *The Racing Times*, no. 266, (March 24, 1856): 92-93.

³⁹ Changes to racehorse training methods will be discussed in the following chapter.

⁴⁰ C., J., and E. Weatherby, *The Racing Calendar for the year 1860*, vo. 61 (London: C. W. Reynell, 1860), xxx.

⁴¹ David Low, *On the Domesticated Animals of the British Islands* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, 1845), 535 – 538. "Sir Joseph Hawley's Resolutions," *The*

whose racing careers had ended at a young age due to injury were retired to stud, and concerns were voiced that breeding from such animals could lead (and, some argued, already had led) to a long-term deterioration of the Thoroughbred horse. In 1860, Lord Redesdale proposed a Light Weight Racing Bill to prohibit the running of horses under particularly low weights which had, he believed, reduced the quality of the Thoroughbred, and led to small boys being injured by riding horses they could not control.⁴² In his opinion,

‘All racing must be more or less attended with gambling; but it was nevertheless permitted and encouraged, upon the ground that it tended to promote excellence in [the British] breed of horses, but when a system prevailed which tended to promote gambling, and at the same time to discourage the breeding of stout horses, a ground for legislative interference was established.’⁴³

At the same session, the Earl of Derby questioned the efficacy of introducing legislation to prohibit running horses under low weights, when, ‘that which is really the cause of a great deal of evil and the deterioration in the breed of horses is the way in which the animals are forced forward, owing to the vast preponderance of two-year-old races.’⁴⁴ Lord Redesdale’s Bill was withdrawn on the grounds that the Jockey Club would regulate this issue, and so the debate regarding the deterioration of the Thoroughbred and the negative impact of racing two-year-olds rumbled on. Only a month after the Bill’s second hearing, an editorial in *The Times* pronounced— comparing racing young horses with expecting a 12-year-old child to compete in a university boat race— ‘What can

Times, January 14, 1869, 5. “Nothing in the Papers,” *Illustrated London News*, February 20, 1869, 194. ‘Oxonian’, “Two-Year-Old Racing,” *The Times*, February 19, 1869, 4.

⁴² Light Weight Racing Bill, Bill Presented, First Reading. HL Deb, 16 February 1860, Vol. 156 cc1102-3. Light Weight Racing Bill, Second Reading. HL Deb, 12 June 1860, Vol. 159 cc295-314.

⁴³ Light Weight Racing Bill, Second Reading. HL Deb 12 June 1860, Vol. 159 cc300.

⁴⁴ Light Weight Racing Bill, Second Reading. HL Deb 12 June 1860, Vol. 159 cc312.

be expected from such a system of calling upon children to do the work of men, or upon colts to do the work of horses, but a deterioration of breed?’⁴⁵

In 1869, the Jockey Club amended the Rules of Racing once more, this time banning the racing of two-year-olds before May. Although the alteration to Rule 14, which effectively abolished yearling races from 1859, might suggest that the Jockey Club had long taken public concerns about equine welfare and the degeneration of the Thoroughbred seriously, it was a relatively easy choice to make, because yearling racing was not particularly widespread.⁴⁶ Two-year-old racing, however, which made up such a significant percentage of the racing calendar by that time, and which had substantial arguments for and against its continuation, would have been far more difficult for the Club to abolish.

Some of these changes to the Rules of Racing were also largely a matter of statistics. Up until 1833, all Thoroughbreds had taken their birthdate as May 1st, which meant that horses could, if they had been born in March, for example, be 14 months old before being counted as yearlings. Such a horse would have continued to be classed as a yearling until May 1st of the following year (26 months old). When the Jockey Club changed the official Thoroughbred birthdate to January 1st, however, a horse born in March was from then on classed as a yearling from January 1st the following year (10 months old).⁴⁷ Prior to the rule change in 1869 which abolished two-year old racing before May 1st, a racehorse born in May, would have been classed as a two-year old from January 1st even though it was really only 19 months old.⁴⁸ To further add to the confusion, such a horse only took its birthday as January 1st at races run under Jockey Club Rules; outside of this racing circuit, the May 1st birthday still stood until 1858, after

⁴⁵ *The Times*, Monday, Jul 09, 1860, p. 9

⁴⁶ C. M. Prior, *The History of the Racing Calendar and Stud-Book* (London: The Sporting Life, 1926), 156.

⁴⁷ Edward and Charles Weatherby, *The Racing Calendar for the year 1833*, vol. 88 (London, C. W. Reynell, 1833), xxv.

⁴⁸ C, J, E, and JP Weatherby, *The Racing Calendar for the year 1869*, vo. 97, (London: C, J, E, and JP Weatherby, 1869), XXXII.

which the birthdate was brought in line with those of the Jockey Club.⁴⁹ 1859 was, of course, the year that the Jockey Club abolished two-year-old racing prior to May 1st. Such statistical massaging, whether conscious or unconscious on behalf of the Jockey Club, meant that for a period of over 20 years, horses running in races as two-year olds prior to May 1st, who were born later than January 1st (which they inevitably were) were in some cases under two years of age when they were raced.

The amendments to the rules of racing which prohibited the racing of two-year-olds before May were short-lived. Less than four years after the changes were first introduced, the date was revised again in 1873 to March 25, the new first day of the flat-racing calendar.⁵⁰ The initial logic that not permitting two-year-olds to race before May would stop trainers from testing their horses in mock-races known as ‘trials’ when they were yearlings did not hold sufficient sway over the ruling body of flat-racing.⁵¹ Thus, horses could continue to be run in two-year-old races, despite being less than 24 months old. At the end of the day, decisions regarding the regulations of the age at which horses could run were a case of money versus possible breed degeneration and animal welfare concerns, and, for the sake of the continuation of the sport in its then ‘modern’ form, two-year-old racing continued to be a part of its culture and practice. To what extent these changes impacted racehorse training methods will be explored in the next chapter.

The trend towards racing young horses was ultimately unstoppable. The long-running Queen’s Plates were eventually disbanded in 1887 due to dwindling

⁴⁹ C. M. Prior, *The History of the Racing Calendar and Stud-Book*, 226-227.

⁵⁰ C, J, E, and JP Weatherby, *The Racing Calendar for the year 1873*, vo. 101 (London: C, J, E, and JP Weatherby, 1873), XXX.

⁵¹ Some successful trainers spoke out against this system. John Porter believed that ‘hundreds of horses [were] permanently ruined by such pernicious premature training,’ and that ‘far too much encouragement [was] given to two-year-old racing.’

numbers of runners and a long-held doubt as to their efficacy.⁵² Instead, public funding was diverted to stallion premiums in an attempt to improve the quality of horses, including Thoroughbred stallions, which were standing at stud.⁵³ Yet, despite the fact that the abolition of the Queen's Plates had effectively ended any public funding of horse racing, a quiet unease remained about the Thoroughbred racehorse's ability to sustain and improve the national horse population remained. In 1889, at the Royal Commission on Horse Breeding, the eminent veterinary surgeon George Fleming was questioned by Sir. Jacob Wilson, an influential member of the Royal Agricultural Society and advisor to the government, about the impact of racing young Thoroughbreds on the breed. Fleming was in little doubt about the negative effects of this development. He was certain that horses were 'raced too young' and that two-year-old racing had 'encouraged the breeding of a very faulty kind of horse, of a very useless kind of horse.' When Wilson pushed Fleming to expand further on the impact of sprint racing on the Thoroughbred, and what might be done to improve the situation, Fleming answered that sprint racing made it possible that a horse 'with a defect in its wind' could still win races—something that would have been impossible in long distance races. Asked to elaborate on whether breeding from such a horse was advisable, Fleming replied, 'Certainly not; he ought to be abolished all together.'⁵⁴

⁵² Light Weight Racing Bill, 16 February & 12 June 1860 (Lords). Horse Racing. Leave, HC Deb 24, May 1870, Vol. 201, cc1348-64. Address for a Royal Commission, HL Deb, 20 February 1873, Vol. 214, cc702-21. Supply—considered in Committee. HC Deb 2 May 1873, Vol. 215, cc1453-7. Export of Horses— Deterioration of the Breed, HC Deb, 27 April 1875, Vol. 223, cc1694-735. James Rice, *History of the British Turf, from the earliest times to the present day* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1879), 334 – 336.

⁵³ Encouragement of Horse Breeding— Appropriation of £5,000, HC Deb, 13 September 1887, Vol. 321, c475. "The Royal Commission On Horsebreeding," *The Times*, December 24, 1887, 10.

⁵⁴ *Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Royal Commission on Horse Breeding - Index and List of Witnesses* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office: 1890), 49.

The racehorse, whether for good or ill, was deeply connected to national identity and the nation's ability to supply the armed services with suitable horses. The abolition of the Queen's Plates and opinions such as those voiced by Fleming and numerous others in the Commons and the Lords over more nearly three decades should have marked the end of horse racing (and, by extension, the Thoroughbred racehorse) as the ultimate test of equine quality, but it did not. Many government officials had direct ties to horse racing, in particular as racehorse owners and members of the Jockey Club. As far as the majority of them were concerned, breeding and racing horses for the nation was a patriotic act, whether it was formally subsidised by the public purse or not.

In 1890, Francis Lawley lamented the extent to which sprint racing for two-year-olds had taken over the sport of horse racing, and the detrimental effect it had had on the Thoroughbred horse. He laid the blame for the proliferation of sprint racing firmly at the feet of the Jockey Club, which he said had failed to curtail it the 1860s, when this might still have been possible. Instead, the Club's inaction had validated sprint racing, and, by the 1890s, reforming racing to its previous system was 'beyond human control.' With the demise of longer distance races, he believed, 'the romance of horse racing... [had] been extinguished.'⁵⁵ That same year the racehorse trainer William Day warned,

'If we wish to retain our national character as breeders of the best horses of every description in the world, we must have more regard and pay greater attention to the selection of the stock we breed from, or we shall soon be passed and beaten in the race for supremacy by the enterprising foreigner...'⁵⁶

In many ways, the racehorse occupied a paradoxical cultural space during the 19th century. As an abstract concept, the racehorse had long represented national pride and superiority. The Thoroughbred was relied upon by the nation to

⁵⁵ Hon. Francis Lawley, "Trainers – New and Old," *Baily's Magazines of Sports and Pastimes*, May 1, 1890, 325.

⁵⁶ William Day, *The Horse: How to Breed and Rear Him* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1890), 21.

improve carriage and saddle horses, as well as horses for military purposes; it was held up as a symbol of the eminence of British horse breeding, and Britishness as a whole. Yet many believed that changes within the sport of horse racing were leading (or had already led) to the Thoroughbred's decline, which was a threat to the superiority of the Thoroughbred, as well as the country.

Concern about the decline of the Thoroughbred horse never fully disappeared, and in the early 20th century, the argument remained relatively unchanged. The calls of critics for more than fifty years had done little to change racing's emphasis on sprint-racing young horses, and apprehension about its impact on Thoroughbred breeding had fallen on deaf years. Although the abolition of the Queen's Plates had led to public money being diverted towards showing classes for breeding stallions at agricultural shows, which evaluated the horses' conformation and health, this had little impact on the breeding of racehorses; Thoroughbred breeders continued to regard a stallion's success on the racecourse as the primary determinant as to its suitability for breeding purposes. In 1901, a columnist for the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* lamented:

‘... few racehorses of any class last long on the Turf at the present time. Their legs go wrong or their temper, or probably both go wrong, with their wind and other desirable qualities; hence they are put to the stud as soon as possible, with a flourish of trumpets before the worst is known about them. What their stock is likely to be one may imagine without difficulty. A dash of speed, bad legs, a wild temper, no constitution—trainers are familiar enough with those characteristics, and know whence and how they are transmitted.’⁵⁷

Yet, when horse racing came under further public scrutiny during World War I, influential figures within horse racing succeeded in having the temporary War-time ban on racing repealed on the grounds that horse racing had never been ‘just a sport’. Rather, ‘racing... had, from time immemorial, by the system of elimination of any but the best, placed [the British] horse-breeding industry in

⁵⁷ “Circular Notes,” *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 27 April, 1901, 306

absolute supremacy throughout the world...’⁵⁸ In a statement co-authored by Captain Greer, Lord Jersey and Lord Durham, horse racing was deemed essential because ‘the race-course is the only test which can be applied to prove that certain animals of the breed possess those qualities of speed, soundness, and stamina, that constitute the value of the thoroughbred in the general scheme of National horse-breeding.’⁵⁹ Race meetings were ‘not at any time, a mere amusement,’ but ‘assemblies for the test of quality’ and ‘tests of endurance.’⁶⁰ This, of course, ran in direct opposition to the long-standing views about the deterioration of the Thoroughbred brought about by racing young animals over short distances, and their short careers as racehorses —criticisms that had never fully gone away. Perhaps most curiously of all, Winton has found in his research into Britain’s military horse supplies that the nation didn’t even particularly need ‘light horses’ of a thoroughbred type during the War, but draught horses—horses which, as one reader letter pointed out in the *Times*, had been managed and improved entirely without racing.⁶¹

After a brief, well-organised public campaign by the racing community, the Jockey Club and the government relented, and reinstated racing at Newmarket as from the middle of July, 1917— just two months after it had been banned. Racing continued at Newmarket until the end of the war, largely without concern or criticism. It was a spectacular victory for the horse racing industry (which it undoubtedly was by this point), and national pride in the Thoroughbred horse.⁶²

⁵⁸ *The Racing Calendar*, 1917, CL.

⁵⁹ *The Racing Calendar*, 1917, CLXII.

⁶⁰ Robert Wallace, “Horse Breeding and Horse Racing,” *The Times*, May 17, 1917, 3.
 “The Stoppage of Racing,” *Newmarket Journal*, May 19, 1917, np.

⁶¹ Graham Winton, *Theirs Not to Reason Why: Horsing the British Army 1875 – 1925* (Solihull, Helion & Company, 2013), 259 – 393. ‘Ignoramus’, “Horse Breeding,” *The Times*, May 21, 1917, 3.

⁶² In 1913, the Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News published an article about how training establishments had changed in the previous 50 years, which stated that, ‘racing has been elevated to the status of a recognised industry...’ showing that racing insiders were conscious at the time of this change from sporting pastime to industry which had

After so many decades of disparagement and fear for the animal's decline, and the negative impact that sprint racing may have had, the Thoroughbred horse (or was it perhaps the racing industry?) succeeded in maintaining its patriotic allure and reclaimed its status as an emblem of British excellence. Perhaps Francis Lawley was right in his assessment that '*Fieri non debuit, factum valet*' (what ought not to be done, when done, becomes valid).⁶³

After establishing that Thoroughbred racehorses were regarded as financial assets that were possibly deteriorating in quality, the question now emerges whether all racehorses were universally considered to be the same. By examining how racehorses' behaviours were modified in early training, and the differences which humans identified in individual racehorses, the following section will show that not all racehorses were afforded the same status by humans. Equine behaviour, and anthropomorphic 'personality' traits could influence how humans behaved towards a horse, and might even have an impact on the horse's racing career.

The racehorse as an individual animal

A considerable number of 19th and early 20th century writers on the subject of horse racing paid attention to racehorse behaviour and racehorse lives, which make an attempt at understanding racehorses as historical actors possible. These documents, which contain detailed descriptions of racehorse behaviour and anecdotes of human and equine interaction, form an imperfect yet rich resource of the relationship between humans and racehorses, and how racehorses were understood. They show that equine behaviour could be regarded positively or negatively, and that, just as humans could shape racehorses' behaviour, racehorses also shaped human behaviour towards them. From 1870, coinciding

occurred. See: Frederick Adye, "Reminiscences— The Trainer and His Art," *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 11 January, 1913, 840.

⁶³ Hon. Francis Lawley, "Trainers – New and Old," *Baily's Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, May 1, 1890, 325.

with an increase in racehorse training-specific publications, equine behaviour, especially the behaviour of individual racehorses, was mentioned more frequently in racehorse training manuals and sporting publications. What is most noticeable is that individual horses were described in terms of their accomplishments (or lack of) and their ‘personality’.

Young thoroughbreds did not enter training stables ready to perform as racehorses. Rather, humans needed to teach them to become racehorses, and prepare them via a training regime for their future races. Creating a racehorse out of a young, relatively untrained horse required training the animal to tolerate pieces of equipment, respond to certain cues, and remain tractable in different environments. To facilitate this process, young horses were initially handled prior to starting training, often at the place where they were bred. There they were introduced to being tied up from a headcollar, and being led from a cavesson (a form of bitless bridle, which works via a leather-covered curved metal bar or chain on the horse’s nose). Taking the young horses for walks allowed them to be exposed to things they would encounter later under saddle.⁶⁴ Short-term, this also ensured that the horses would be more cooperative on their journey to the training stable.⁶⁵

Once at the training yard, the trainer and his stable lads would methodically build upon this process until each young racehorse could start being exercised with the specific goal of improving its condition. Before this could happen, handlers need to accustom the horses to the different equipment they would wear when ridden, and teach them to respond to different cues. The primary goal of this early training was to foster cooperation with humans. Once a horse was responding reliably as desired to one specific exercise, the person in charge of breaking in the horse moved on to the next thing he wanted the horse to learn. After a horse showed no resistance to a bridle and saddle, and would quietly walk and trot

⁶⁴ Earl of Suffolk & Berkshire et. al., *Racing & Steeple* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1893), 121.

⁶⁵ Richard Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment and Training of the English Race Horse in a Series of Rough Notes*, Vol. 1 (London: James Ridgeway, 1840), 248 – 252.

around the handler on a long line (longe),⁶⁶ horses then needed to be taught to respond to the bit—stopping, going backwards, and turning left and right. Once the horse was responsive to these cues from the bit, it was carefully introduced to carrying a rider on its back. The horse then needed to respond to cues given on the bit (which the horse had already been taught on the ground) and to go forward to pressure from the rider’s legs (new cues).⁶⁷ The riders who first sat on young horses needed to be quiet yet firm, and, above all, likely to stay on top if the horse objected to the rider being there.⁶⁸

Young racehorses also had to be taught to go at speed as part of a group, which was how they would usually be exercised while in training. The use of a quiet older horse for the young horses to follow was advocated by many, suggesting that trainers believed this horse could act as an example for the younger ones to follow.⁶⁹ Once the horse was responding to all the cues as desired, the trainer deemed the animal ready to begin doing work at a canter and take its first gallop. After this point, the training regime was started with the goal of improving the

⁶⁶ Sometimes also called ‘lounge’ or ‘lunge’ in texts. It refers both to the verb ‘to longe’ and the noun representing the long line that is utilised in its process. Today, ‘longe’ is used in American English, while ‘lunge’ is used in Britain, Ireland and Australia.

⁶⁷ Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment and Training of the English Race Horse*, vol. 1, 347 – 375. ‘Cecil’, *Stable Practice, or Hints on Training for the Turf, the Chase, and the Road* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1852), 43 – 48. R. H. Copperthwaite, *The Turf and the Racehorse* (London: Day & Son Limited, 1866), 147. Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire et. al., *Racing & Steeplechasing*, 124 - 129. “Sketches at Newmarket,” *Illustrated Sporting & Dramatic News*, October 23, 1880, 136. William Day, *The Racehorse in Training* (London: R. Clay, Sons and Taylor, 1880), 65 - 74. John Porter, *Kingsclere* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1896), 197- 200. Alfred E. T. Watson, *The Racing World and Its Inhabitants* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1904), 41 – 43.

⁶⁸ Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment and Training of the English Race Horse*, vol. 1, 369 – 370. “Breaking Yearlings,” *Racing Illustrated*, January 22, 1896, 157.

⁶⁹ John Porter, *Kingsclere* (London: Spottiswoode, 1896), 198. Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire et. al, *Racing & Steeplechasing*, 129. Day, *The Racehorse in Training*, 67.

horse's condition and preparing the animal for its first race, which will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

The trainer William Day was an advocate of breaking horses as yearlings because he believed that they were 'reduced to submission with less restraint than when older.'⁷⁰ Although, as has been established earlier, the general trend towards racing horses at a younger age was largely a combination of money and impatience, Day's recommendations imply that there was a knock-on effect of this practice for racehorse training: it made the trainer's work easier, because younger horses were more likely to cooperate with human wishes than older ones.

Due to differences in temperament and behaviour, some horses progressed more quickly in early training than others. This difference in equine temperament required the person in charge of training horses to carefully assess them. The sporting writer 'Cecil' explained:

'Good temper is an attribute more frequently the result of treatment than innate propensities: the best dispositions may be spoiled by ruffianly usage—or the reverse, pusillanimous timidity. High-couraged horses will become intractable by abuse, and sluggish ones will turn sulky. It is of some importance to ascertain the tendency of an animal's temper, in order to facilitate the progress of tuition.'⁷¹

Writing almost thirty years later, the trainer William Day echoed this:

'Gentleness and time are two of the most essential adjuncts in breaking the colt; for if departed from, and he be hurried in his work or abused in irritable hands, immediately the progress you are seeking to make becomes a retrograde course.'⁷²

⁷⁰ Day, *The Racehorse in Training*, 70.

⁷¹ 'Cecil', *Stable Practice, or Hints on Training for the Turf, the Chase, and the Road* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1852), 54

⁷² Day, *The Racehorse in Training*, 66.

Young racehorses at the beginning of training were widely regarded as kind and impressionable; they were liable to pick up habits, good or bad, depending on how they handled.⁷³ Humans, therefore, not only observed equine behaviour and interpreted it in anthropomorphic terms, but played an active role in physically and behaviourally shaping the individual equine athlete each racehorse was becoming. The sporting writer Harry Hieover believed that ‘the thoroughbred colt is by nature docile, harmless... more disposed to show exuberance of spirits, but quite as free from natural vice...’⁷⁴ The young Thoroughbred was also readily compared with a human child; ‘The old proverb of bringing up a child in the way it should go is very applicable to the yearling,’ said a feature on racehorse training in *The Graphic* in 1889.⁷⁵ Like children, horses needed discipline; “‘strict, not harsh” is the motto for the stable,’ recommended one training manual.⁷⁶

Thus, while racehorse trainers and the people who worked for them had the common goal of preparing the horse for its future conditioning training and later racing engagements, they had to work within the constraints placed by each racehorse, which did not necessarily respond identically, or progress at the same rate as another horse. A misjudgement of equine temperament could have long-term negative effects on a horse’s behaviour, and might result in the animal becoming resistant to future training.

⁷³ Watson, *The Racing World and its Inhabitants*, 34

⁷⁴ Harry Hieover, A Short Tale on Long Tails, *New Sporting Magazine*, November 1849, 359.

⁷⁵ H. B. Bromfad, “The Career of a Racehorse,” *The Graphic*, June 1, 1889, 607.

⁷⁶ Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire et. al, *Racing & Steeplechasing*, 125. It is tempting to connect the young-racehorse-as-human-child analogy to changing ideas of childhood in Victorian Britain, but there is considerable evidence that 17th and 18th century classical equitation manuals likened the manege to a classroom. See: Barbara Ravelhofer, “Equestrian Ballet as a Representative of Cultural Change in Europe, c. 1500 - 1700,” in ‘... that I wished myself a horse’ - *The Horse as Representative of Cultural Change in Systems of Thought*, ed. Sonja Fielitz (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2015), 149 – 173.

According Harry Hieover, racehorses might also become bored if they were expected to do the same hard exercise every day without any change in their routine. He concluded that human athletes would be bored by such an unvarying regime, and so too were racehorses. While racehorses were clearly not humans, he pointed out that they were ‘perfectly sensible of what they did and did not like’, and that bored racehorses were liable to misbehave.⁷⁷ Drawing conclusions about how racehorses felt on the basis of human experiences was relatively commonplace. Racehorses could, many believed, ‘lose heart’ if they were pushed too hard in their training. Such an animal might ‘refuse to try’ as a consequence or lose its ‘courage’.⁷⁸ Copperthwaite’s passionate description of racehorses, which he assured his readers, were ‘noble, not alone in appearance, but by nature and instinct,’ demonstrates a deep human appreciation for the racehorse. He explained how a racehorse might express its feelings on race-day through its behaviour towards humans, and that horses had a capacity to appreciate human kindness.⁷⁹ Thus, trainers and the stable lads who worked for them would also have taken into consideration the emotional wellbeing of the racehorses in their care to ensure that their animals remained willing participants who tried their best to run swiftly.

A horse’s character could have a significant impact on how humans behaved towards the animal, and its training. In the early 20th century, opinions varied among writers as to whether racehorses were treated more kindly than they had been previously.⁸⁰ Yet, accounts from the early 19th century suggest that horse behaviour was carefully observed, and that humans considered how their

⁷⁷ Harry Hieover, “A Few Remarks on Training Race-horses,” *New Sporting Magazine*, April 1846, 263 – 264.

⁷⁸ “Racing Commentaries,” *New Sporting Magazine*, April 1862, 302. Cecil, *Stable Practice*, 114-115. R. H. Copperthwaite, *The Turf and the Racehorse* (London: Day & Son Limited, 1866), 150-151.

⁷⁹ Copperthwaite, *The Turf and the Racehorse*, 161-163.

⁸⁰ Watson, *The Racing World and Its Inhabitants*, 3. Sam Darling, *Sam Darling’s Reminiscences* (London: Mills & Boon, 1914), 196.

behaviour could affect the horses in their care. The veterinary surgeon Richard Darvill, who had previously worked in racing, explained that a flighty horse was 'delicate in his constitution, irritable and flighty in his temper, and easily alarmed, either in or out of the stable.'⁸¹ As a result of this, he stated that flighty horses should always be handled patiently, and with kindness. Like a number of other writers on racehorse training, Darvill believed that horses did not have a tendency to become nasty, provided that they were well treated.⁸² He saw in horses an inherent goodness which was only spoiled by negative human behaviour towards them. What exactly trainers understood by a horse's 'constitution' is difficult to define conclusively, however; it encompassed all that was observable about the horse's body, from its behaviour, response to training, and its long-term health and soundness, which could then be distilled down to a spectrum of strong to delicately constituted horses.

To some extent, the sheer ambiguity of what defined each horse's constitution, and what was considered to be a strong or delicately constituted horse reveals the undefinable 'art' of racehorse management. In the late 19th century, the trainer William Day found in horses 'differences of constitution and temperament in different animals too numerous to specify, which can only be discovered in each individual by a practiced eye.'⁸³ Sam Darling, another trainer of the period, also concluded that each horse was different and therefore had to be trained differently.⁸⁴ Taking into account the already established changes in racehorse ages, and the frequency with which new horses came into each training stable, racehorse trainers needed to constantly assess horses' constitutions and behavioural characteristics, which in turn influenced how the horse was trained and managed.

⁸¹ Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment and Training of the English Race Horse*, Vol. 1, 270-271.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 311.

⁸³ William Day, *The Racehorse in Training*, 105.

⁸⁴ Darling, *Sam Darling's Reminiscences*, 204.

For trainers to equate observed equine behaviour with human emotions was not uncommon. ‘Horses are like human beings,’ explained the trainer John Porter. ‘There are no two alike, and inasmuch as each has to do his best on his own individual account, individual characteristics and peculiarities have to be separately studied.’⁸⁵ The trainer Tom Cannon observed:

‘Horses have such different dispositions, just like men, and different expressions of face. The more you see of them the more you find in them. And how they remember! [...] They observe and think—I don’t know whether you’d call it thinking, but it’s very like it—much more than most people fancy. [...] If you take them to new ground you can see that they enjoy it. They keep lively, and look about them, as if they were saying, ‘Halloa! I don’t think I’ve ever been here before. It’s rather a nice place! This is pleasant!’ They like change quite as much the same as we do. We get tired of going the same road every day.’⁸⁶

A horse’s character was also understood to play a crucial role in its success or failure as a racehorse. As R. H. Copperthwaite stated in his training manual,

‘Without temper, and confidence, which usually accompanies it, a racehorse is useless... It is really astonishing the extent to which faint-hearted horses prove not only unserviceable, but injurious to their owners.’⁸⁷

Some horses could be ‘charming,’ ‘game,’ and ‘genuine,’ while others were ‘rogues’ and ‘brutes’. Good horses were ‘well-mannered’ and ‘hardly knew what it was to do wrong’.⁸⁸ The stallion Isonomy, John Porter recalled, ‘gave one the impression he considered himself a deal bigger than he was. Resolution and grit

⁸⁵ Porter, *Kingsclere*, 200-201.

⁸⁶ ‘Rapier’, “A Chat with Tom Cannon,” *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 26 July, 1884, 509.

⁸⁷ Copperthwaite, *The Turf and the Racehorse*, 149- 150

⁸⁸ George Lambton, *The Men and Horses I Have Known* (London: J. A. Allen, 1963), 150. Darling, *Sam Darling’s Reminiscences*, 183.

were conspicuous traits in his character...⁸⁹ He believed that these character traits were passed on to the horse's offspring, in whom he saw 'pluck and determination, qualities which were so conspicuous in their sire.'⁹⁰ Trainers didn't merely observe their horses' behaviour and respond to it, they also attributed 'personality' traits towards them. These positive equine behavioural attributes largely mirrored desirable human sporting characteristics at the time identified by Park and others.⁹¹

'Game' racehorses participated willingly in racing, and were understood to exhibit a desire to win.⁹² Such horses could be almost human; they knew what humans wanted from them, and obliged accordingly. The famous racehorse Ormonde was taken into London in 1887 at the Duke of Westminster's request, so that he could show the animal off to guests at a stable near to his Mayfair property. The incident is so elucidatory of human perceptions of 'game racehorses' that it warrants being quoted in full:

"During the reception in the afternoon Ormonde stood on the lawn, the centre of attraction. He seemed to revel in the attention he received, and cheerfully devoured all the dainties offered him by the ladies-- sugar, flowers, anything. The Queen of the Belgians fed him with lawn grass and carnations. Some of the Indian princes went to the flower-beds and

⁸⁹ Edward Moorehouse and John Porter, *John Porter of Kingsclere* (Grant Richards, London, 1919), 173.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 187.

⁹¹ Roberta J. Park, "Athletes and their Training in Britain and America, 1800 - 1914," in *Sport and Exercise Science: Essays in the History of Sports Medicine*, eds. Jack W. Berryman and Roberta J. Park (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 57. J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 2000), 9.

⁹² For an examination of 'game racehorses' in America, see: Susan Nance, "Game Stallions and Other 'Horseface Minstrelsies' of the American Turf," *Theatre Journal*, 65, no. 3 (2013), 355-372.

plucked geraniums, pelargoniums, and other blooms for Ormonde to eat.’⁹³

In this case, the racehorse became a spectacle, an animal to be admired and fed with exotic things. Like the game racehorse that he was, Ormonde was understood to enjoy all this fuss and behaved ‘cheerfully’; the human-animal adoration was mutual.

Unlike ‘game’ racehorses such as Ormonde, who were praised and cherished, badly behaved horses tended to be described in far less favourable terms, and their conduct might be a reason to end their career. Performance trumped behaviour, however, and, so long as a difficult horse performed well on the racecourse, it was likely to be forgiven for its transgressions. The trainer Richard Marsh recalled one incident when the champion racehorse Diamond Jubilee acted out during a rainstorm and refused to go into his stable:

‘When neither the horse nor ourselves could possibly be made any wetter he quietly walked into the box and began eating his hay! What a devilish fellow he was to be sure when he was so minded. There never was a horse so provoking. Had he been human, I suppose he would have been credited with a sense of humour, a sort of mordant wit.’⁹⁴

A particularly negative interaction with a human could, in some cases, have a long-term impact on the horse. The trainer John Osborne was certain one of his horses, Grand Flaneur, had his temper soured by a stable boy who had tended to him, and that the animal never forgot the incident. As he said, ‘Horses are instinct with memory and amenable to kindness.’⁹⁵ A bad experience could scar a horse for life.

John Sturgess’s illustration of a racehorse refusing to line up with the others at the starting line is tellingly titled *An Incurable Brute*. A man tries to lead a

⁹³ Moorehouse and Porter, *John Porter of Kingsclere*, 276 – 277.

⁹⁴ Richard Marsh, *A Trainer to Two Kings* (London: Cassell, 1925), 215.

⁹⁵ J. B. Radcliffe, *Ashgill or the Life and Times of John Osborne* (London: Sands & Company, 1900), 499 – 500.

reluctant racehorse toward the others. The horse's ears are pinned back in anger, a hind hoof raised as a threat. From behind walks a man wielding a whip.⁹⁶ Another illustration of Sturgess's, *At Her Old Tricks Again*, shows a racehorse rearing under its rider at the start of a race, performing another act of equine resistance.⁹⁷ What might at first seem to be just innocuous drawings by a prolific illustrator of horses serves as a reminder that racehorses were not necessarily willing participants in horse racing. In a letter to his employer in 1917, the trainer John Watson described a horse which he said was 'such a great disappointment;' when at exercise, the mare had 'opposed her bit and took no further interest in her gallops.'⁹⁸ Racehorse trainers, stable lads, owners and spectators alike had expectations that the horses would do what was asked of them, but sometimes racehorses resisted human expectations. Humans, in turn, attributed meaning to such acts of equine resistance.

George Lambton recalled in great detail a horse named Pan who was 'the most incorrigible thief [Lambton] ever came across. Time after time he would allow himself to be beaten when he had a race at his mercy.'⁹⁹ As far as the trainer was concerned, a 'bad' horse's faults were decidedly its own, and not those of the trainer's methods or the way in which the horse was kept; at most, the stable lad who cared for the horse might be to blame. Particularly aggressive stallions were sometimes gelded in an attempt to make them more tractable.¹⁰⁰ This, naturally, made the horse useless for future breeding purposes, which had financial implications for the owner, and life implications for the horse.

The trajectories of racehorses that were removed from the sport due to a lack of potential are difficult to trace, but from a few examples of such horses, the life-

⁹⁶ John Sturgess, "An Incorrigible Brute," *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, July 17, 1880, 133.

⁹⁷ John Sturgess, "At Her Old Tricks Again," *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, August 18, 1883, 577.

⁹⁸ Letter from John Watson, April 15, 1917. Rothschild Archive, 000/1373/8/8

⁹⁹ George Lambton, *The Men and Horses I Have Known*, 139.

¹⁰⁰ George Lambton, Letter, 10 November, 1912, Knowsley Hall Archives.

cycle seems fairly uniform. The racehorse entered the training stable at an age of around 18 months old. Sometime during its circa two-and-a-half year-long residence in the training stable, such an animal was regarded as not possessing the desirable traits, whether they were physical, behavioural or a combination of the two. William Day stated that, 'when horses break down, they are best sold or given away for other than racing, because not one in a hundred ever stands afterwards.'¹⁰¹ The physical animal body sometimes could not stand training, and 'broke' beyond repair. Less than desirable behaviour was another reason for a horse to be taken out of training. One of John Porter's racehorses, Fakir, was quite vicious and was castrated in an attempt to improve his behaviour. Despite this, the horse was regarded to be 'hopeless as a racing proposition. As a result, he was first given away as a hack to another trainer, who then sold him on to a postman, who then sold him on to cab driver.'¹⁰² Another horse of Porter's, a mare, who was taken out of racing as a two-year-old due to her 'wayward temperament,' was sent to a stud to be used as a brood mare.¹⁰³ The Duke of Portland's racing accounts from the 1890s note horses which were 'given away,' while one statement from Kingsclere Training Stables from 1907 lists a horse as being 'written off,' further supporting the fact that racehorses were taken out of training and repurposed.¹⁰⁴ One well-known racehorse owner advised that any two-year old horses that failed to show talent should be shot or given away.¹⁰⁵ Racehorses, therefore, were financial assets-- animals that held potential until tested in training or a race. If they were proven to possess the right physical and behavioural characteristics, which translated to success (or perceived potential

¹⁰¹ Day, *The Racehorse in Training*, 116.

¹⁰² Moorhouse and Porter, *John Porter of Kingsclere*, 144 - 145

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 91

¹⁰⁴ The Duke of Portland's Racing Accounts, 1890, P1F10/2/1/13. The Duke of Portland's Racing Accounts, 1892, P1F10/2/1/12. The Kingsclere Racing Stables Limited, Profit & Loss Account and Balance Sheet, 30th November, 1907, P1F10/3/5/6. All Nottingham University Special Collections.

¹⁰⁵ Sir George Chetwynd, *Racing Reminiscences and Experiences of the Turf*, Vol. 2 (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1891), 53.

success) in racing, they remained in training. If they did not, they were discarded from training, and destroyed, sold, given away, or sent to stud.

From these accounts, it is clear that humans needed to teach young horses to respond to cues and co-operate with humans. People working with racehorses, or who had direct contact with them, picked up on the behaviour and temperament of the animals in their care, and considered how they might feel. Racehorses and humans interacted with one another, although the human response to equine behaviour was sometimes one-sided, because racehorses were expected to demonstrate that they were willing participants in the sport, regardless of differences in temperament or behaviour. While the historical sources which survive of racehorse training methods are entirely human productions, descriptions such as those recounted by many people throughout the 19th and early 20th century provide glimpses of human and racehorse interaction which took place, and show the variety of characteristics which were attributed to racehorses. Although humans dictated the horses' lives, racehorses could and did respond independently towards humans, and humans in turn adjusted their behaviour according to each racehorse to a greater or lesser extent.

Conclusions

By examining the racehorse between 1800 and 1920, both as a cultural construct and as an equine individual, the animal begins to come to the fore in the history of the sport during this period. As the sport of horse racing shifted towards younger animals racing over shorter distances under lighter weights, the racehorse was turning into a financial asset. This financial asset required assessment for its suitability towards racing, and preferably at a young age so as to minimise financial loss for its owner, who was paying for the animal to be in training, and likely held hopes for the animal's future racing career and potential value as a stallion or brood mare at stud.

Racing had long been regarded as a suitable way to test a horse's speed and stamina, meaning that horses with such desirable qualities had been selected for

breeding purposes over many generations. With the shift towards sprint-racing young horses during the early 19th century, and horses remaining in training and racing for fewer years than they had previously, the selection criteria for Thoroughbreds had changed significantly. This resulted in growing concern that the Thoroughbred was deteriorating in quality, which was cause for concern not just for people connected with racing, but also the nation which expected Thoroughbred horses to improve the quality of pleasure riding, driving, and cavalry horses. Yet, it was gradual transformation of the racehorse into a financial asset, which was (in part at least) causing this perceived threat to the breed. Despite more than fifty years of public debates, Royal Commissions, and Jockey Club interventions, concerns about the declining quality of the Thoroughbred never fully abated.

Thoroughbred racehorses were not only understood collectively as financial assets whose quality may have been in decline; as an individual, each racehorse was also expected to possess characteristics that showed it participated willingly in the sport of horse racing. Racehorse training necessitated a steady annual influx of new horses each year, and yearlings had to be taught to respond to cues, and listen to a rider on their backs if they were to become racehorses. Not all young horses progressed in this early training at the same rate, although they were universally regarded as kind and impressionable. To ensure that a yearling grew up to be tractable racehorse, humans who handled it needed to be patient and kind, while also setting strict boundaries; to some extent, the young racehorses was regarded like a child. As the horse grew older, its behaviour was understood primarily in terms of what human actors wanted from the racehorse.

Each racehorse's behaviour had the power to shape how trainers and stable lads responded to the horse. Some horses were described as 'genuine' (best defined as a mixture of kindness and reliability under saddle), or 'game' (willing to try to win). Yet horses might also be nervous, sensitive, plucky, determined, cheerful or confident. Some even believed that horses could have a sense of humour, or at least found some things amusing. Human understanding of racehorses, although anthropomorphic, was quite nuanced. While each horse was allowed to have a few quirks, and its behaviour shaped the way humans behaved towards it and

how it was trained, primarily the racehorse needed to be ‘game’ and ‘courageous’ and exhibit a desire to win. Thus, human pride in individual racehorses was predominantly reserved for animals that exhibited a desired ‘personality,’ which translated to success on the racecourse.

On the surface at least, the account of Ormonde being fed sugar and flowers by his admirers speaks of a sentimentalised view of racehorses. The more generic cultural construct of the racehorse, however, mandated horses to be willing participants. As a result, racehorses which lacked a perceived desire to take part and win in the sport were believed to be resisting their destiny to become equine heroes and symbols of national pride. Therefore, racehorses which did not display ‘game’ and ‘courage’ rarely continued in the sport, and might have been rejected for breeding purposes as well. The ‘incorrigible brute’ was a fissure in the idealised image of the malleable equine athlete that was willingly formed by human hands. Just as Ritvo has concluded, racehorses too were expected to adhere to ideals of the willing servant, but in the case of racing, animal servitude simultaneously constituted traits closely associated with ideal masculine sporting characteristics. Horses which did not embody these attributes ceased to be ‘models of Britishness’ and sporting values, and were rejected from the arena of the sport as a result. Although, as Landry has found, the Thoroughbred horse was regarded as an emblem of Englishness and national identity, this meaning was dependent upon cooperative equine behaviour that represented human sporting ideals. Horse racing had little room for animals which displayed such unpatriotic conduct. Therefore, although the wider cultural construct of the racehorse represented racehorses as financial assets, members of a declining breed and symbols of national pride, individual racehorses were not guaranteed automatic association with these meanings for their entire lives.

2. Training the Racehorse

‘To assist Nature is all that a trainer can effect; but to impose a greater strain on a horse than Nature can bear, is to defeat the purpose for which the animal is put into training.’

— John Kent, racehorse trainer

As the previous chapter established, racehorses were understood both as a collective, and as individual creatures. Changes in the ages at which horses entered training and ran races meant that racehorses were frequently regarded as financial assets. In order for young Thoroughbreds to become racehorses, they needed to be taught to respond to human cues, and become accustomed to wearing equipment and carrying a rider. Humans responded to equine behavioural cues as well, sometimes adjusting their own behaviour towards horses as a result. This resulted in two-way communication between humans and racehorses. Horses did not necessarily respond alike, and therefore some horses took longer to start under saddle than others. Although negative interaction with humans, such as rushing early training, could have a long-term impact on equine behaviour, racehorses were expected to show that they were willing participants in the sport of horse racing. Horses which did not display these characteristics were thought to be rejecting their destiny, and were taken out of training.

This chapter builds on these findings to show how racehorses were trained during the 19th century, and how training changed during this time period. Although a number of works on the development of horsemanship in the early modern period touch on horse training methods, the process of training racehorses has largely been overlooked by historians of the sport with the exception of research done by Mewett.¹ His research on racehorse training

¹ Giles Worsley, “A Courtly Art: the history of ‘haute École’ in England,” *The Court Historian*, 6, no. 1 (2001): 29-47. Peter Edwards, *Horse and Man in Early Modern*

during the 17th and 18th century, and its influence on the development of human athlete training, shows that training regimes were greatly influenced by humoral theory. Training focused on bringing the horse into condition by maintaining a balance of the humours within the equine body.² We can see these ideas in this brief description of racehorse management from 1785:

‘Give him moderate exercise morning and evenings, airings, or the fetching in of his water, and let him know no other violence than his courses only... Those sweats are more wholesome that are given abroad, and the coolings most natural that are given before he comes into the stable: his limbs must be kept supple with cool ointments, and let not any hospices come into his body.’³

As will become evident in this chapter, racehorse training continued to be guided by this idea of maintaining balance in the equine body, and the core elements of racehorse training—exercise, sweating, physic and feeding—carried over into the 19th century.

To break racehorse training down to its most basic level, the purpose of training was to reshape the racehorse’s body into that of an equine athlete capable of running swiftly over a set distance in the company of other horses, while responding to the commands of the rider on its back. The racehorse’s body, therefore, was the focal point of interaction in this process. Although, as we shall see later, racehorse training changed during the 19th century in a number of ways, this essence of training remained constant.

England (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2007), 35 - 67. Elaine Walker, “‘The Author of Their Skill’: Human and Equine Understanding in the Duke of Newcastle’s New Method,” in *The Horse as a Cultural Icon*, (eds.) Peter Edwards, Karl Enenkel and Elspeth Graham (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 327 - 350.

² Peter G. Mewett, “From Horses to Humans: Species Crossovers in the Origin of Modern Sports Training,” *Sport History Review*, 2002, 33, no. 2 (2002): 95 – 120.

³ ‘Experienced Gentlemen’, *The Sportsman’s Dictionary; or, the Gentleman’s Companion for Town and Country* (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1785), n.p.

As the previous chapter has established, racing stables had a high turnover of horses each year, which increased as racing trended towards sprint-racing younger horses over shorter distances; with a racehorse beginning its training at around 18 months old, most flat-racers would be retired by their sixth year. This chapter will examine how these changes impacted on racehorse training methods. Human-instigated changes within the sport posed significant challenges for racehorse trainers, which they overcame by experimenting, changing and adapting training methods to suit this new type of racing that was rapidly taking over the sport. Although racehorse training methods changed during the 19th century, so that by the 1880s trainers and sporting writers spoke of a ‘revolution’ in racehorse training, these changes were not, perhaps quite as significant as they were made out to be. While two ‘cornerstones’ of racehorse training—physic and sweating—fell out of favour, elements of both practices lingered, and their demise did not indicate that racehorse trainers had fully abandoned their belief in humoral theory as a guiding principle of training.

This chapter will first set the scene, by looking at the people who worked in training stables in the 19th century, and how these training stables operated. With this foundation in place, the focus then moves towards how trainers relied on a well-established training regime consisting of four ‘cornerstones’ to modify the racehorse’s body to prepare the animal for its future racing engagements. Trainers adapted their training methods to suit different horses in their care, and used visual and tactile indicators to read the horses’ bodies. Because some training methods also entailed a degree of risk, trainers experimented with new techniques. Having established that training methods adapted to suit changes taking place within racing, the final section of this chapter examines racehorse training in the late 19th century, concluding that, although racehorse training methods did change during the 19th century, perhaps these changes were not quite as significant as some writers of the period declared them to be.

Trainers and training stables

To maximise the chances for success, the racehorse's body was carefully managed by a team of men who controlled every aspect its care, handling and training. At the head of the training stable was the trainer (sometimes called 'groom' or 'training groom' up until the mid- 19th century). He managed his training establishment and the training schedules of the horses in his care, and well as the business relationship with the owners of the racehorses he trained. To ensure the smooth running of the training stable, each establishment also had one head lad, who answered directly to the trainer, and acted as the trainer's right-hand man. The head lad was an experienced, competent horseman who was capable of riding the most difficult horses in the stable if needed. He supervised the lads in their daily duties, and took charge of the training stables when the trainer was away.⁴ Innovations in racehorse transportation in the early 19th century, which significantly reduced travelling times, resulted in the new role of travelling head lad, who would supervise the horses when they went to races.⁵ In a few cases, the wives and mothers of racehorse trainers also assisted in ensuring the smooth running of the stables, as well as overseeing the horses' morning exercise when the trainer was away.⁶

⁴ Richard Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Racehorse in a Series of Rough Notes*, Vol. 1, (London: James Ridgway, 1840), 283 – 284. William Day, *The Racehorse in Training* (London: R. Clay, Sons and Taylor, 1880), 21 – 23.

⁵ M. Horace Hayes, *Stable Management & Exercise* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1900), 401. Alfred E T Watson, *The Racing World and Its Inhabitants* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1904), 51.

⁶ When sporting writer 'The Druid' set the scene for his fictional trainer Tom Bronze in 1851, it was surely no coincidence that he described the running of the training establishment as, 'under their joint care-- for Mrs. B. knows nearly as much about condition as her spouse.' A report from 1840 indicates that the trainer John Day's mother would supervise the lads and tell them what work the horses should do when her son was away. In 1886, Ellen Chaloner, the daughter of the jockey and trainer John

Trainers also employed a number of apprentices and stable lads who performed the manual labour of looking after the racehorses and exercising them each day. Typically, one lad was responsible for the care of two racehorses, although smaller yards employed proportionally more lads per horse than larger yards. Stable lads were expected to adhere to the strict discipline enforced by the trainer and his head lad.⁷ Most lads (many of whom were only 12 or 13 years old when they started working at the stables) lived on-site—a practical feature which afforded the trainer greater control over their lives.⁸ Despite this, the majority of 19th century texts about racehorse training indicate that stable lads were thought liable to be troublesome and untrustworthy; careless lads might ruin a horse's odds by speaking about its running form to others, or not handle a valuable racehorse appropriately, which could ruin its temper or put its health in jeopardy.⁹

Osborne, became the first British woman to be granted a trainer's license, after her husband died suddenly at a young age. During World War I, Sam Darling's wife took over the running of their training establishment while he was away fighting.

⁷ Charles Apperley, "ART. IV.-A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Race-horse," *The Quarterly Review*, 49, no. 98, (July 1833): 406

⁸ The custom of stable lads sleeping in the passageways of the stables fell out of favour by the mid-19th century, and instead lads were accommodated in purpose-built dormitories. This change was likely due to the growing popularity of loose boxes instead of tie-stalls for racehorses, which will be explored in a later chapter, rather than any change in how trainers perceived the lads. Lads sleeping in stables served a practical function: noise from a horse that became cast (wedged up against a stall partition when trying to stand up after lying down) would wake the boys. This enabled them to act quickly in such an emergency, thereby preventing injury and possible death of the valuable horse. The risk of horses becoming cast diminished when they were stabled in loose boxes.

⁹ In the late 19th century, a number of trainers such as Matthew Dawson established Sunday schools for the boys to ensure they received a moral (religious) education. The Stablemen's Institute in Newmarket provided wholesome recreation designed to keep lads out of pubs and mischief.

Most trainers learned their profession from a young age, either by growing up as the children of racehorse trainers, or by working their way up from stable lads, to jockeys or head lads, and eventually setting up as racehorse trainers in their own right.¹⁰ Thus, knowledge and training methods were learned from instruction and practice. Although some texts indicate that trainers became gradually better (formally) educated as the century progressed, and many also advocated trainers consulting certain texts related to training, it is uncertain to what extent trainers at the beginning of the 19th century were literate.¹¹ The scarcity of written documents produced by trainers may be said to indicate that few could write, but it is equally plausible that whatever written materials they produced were simply not kept for posterity, and that training knowledge was primarily shared between people through conversation and demonstration.

From the 1870s, however, many racehorse trainers cultivated their public image by writing memoirs, manuals, and articles in sporting publications. Some trainers achieved almost celebrity-like status; Robert Black remarked that a racehorse trainer in the 1890s was ‘interviewed by society papers and has long biographical articles written about him,’ and had ‘attained the dignity of a literary gent.’¹² Picture-heavy magazines such as *Racing Illustrated* and the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* showcased trainers’ establishments in multi-page features.

¹⁰ As from 1872, trainers who wished to use Jockey Club-owned land to train their horses were also required to apply for a license. Trainers who trained at Newmarket would thus have had to obtain such a licence and obey Jockey Club rules, not just on the race course, but also on the training grounds. Failure to play by the rules could therefore result in a trainer’s licence being withdrawn. As the influence of the Jockey Club grew, eventually everyone who intended to train racehorses needed to apply for a license. See: C, J, E, and JP Weatherby, *The Racing Calendar for the year 1872*, vol. 100, London, C, J, E, and JP Weatherby, p. LII

¹¹ ‘Phoenix’, “On the Advantages of Race-Horse Vans, and Other Matters Connected with Racing,” *The Sporting Magazine*, 94, May 1839, 33. James Christie Whyte, *History of the British Turf, from the earliest period to the present day* (London: Henry Colburn, 1840), 523 – 524.

¹² Robert Black, *Horse Racing in England* (London: R. Bentley & Son, 1893), 226.

These ‘celebrity’ trainers used their writing as a platform to emphasise their ‘modern-ness’ by talking negatively about the ‘old’ methods of training, one stating that there was ‘as much difference as between an express train and an old stage-coach...’¹³ Many trainers courted publicity, and emphasised the superiority of their training methods to those of their forefathers’.¹⁴ A detailed description of the racehorse trainer in 1901 suggested that many had ambitions beyond being successful racehorse trainers, and that there was an element of one-upmanship for the fanciest abode in places such as Newmarket where there was a heavy concentration of trainers.¹⁵

By the 19th century, the issue of money was always lurking in the background. One training account for the year 1822-23 indicates a cost of £86-14 excluding shoeing, medicine and travel costs.¹⁶ Darvill estimated the average weekly training charge in 1840 to be £2 2 shillings per week.¹⁷ In 1852, ‘Cecil’ indicated training fees of between ‘36 shillings to two guineas per week.’¹⁸ Even at the cheapest rate of 36 shillings, a racehorse owner was looking to pay over £90 annually for the privilege. To put this sum into perspective, the annual earnings

¹³ Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire, et. al., *Racing and Steeple-Chasing* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1893), 196 – 197, 199. See also: “Our Trainers,” *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 24 January, 1880, p. 466.

¹⁴ The modern-as-positive narrative which is so prevalent in trainer-authored racing texts is particularly interesting when viewed in the wider context of discussions taking place at that time regarding the degeneration of the Thoroughbred. It is almost as if trainers tried to create a counter-narrative to offset the growing criticisms thrown at the sport.

¹⁵ Charles Richardson, *The English Turf: A Record of Horses and Courses*, (London: Methuen & Co. 1901), 217-221.

¹⁶ Race horse accounts for the year 1822-23, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, 1461/1459.

¹⁷ Richard Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Racehorse in a Series of Rough Notes*, Vol. 1, (London: James Ridgway, 1840), 103.

¹⁸ Cecil, *Stable Practice* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1852), 19.

of a surgeon in 1851 were approximately £200.¹⁹ In 1865, Copperthwaite estimated the cost of keeping a racehorse (including transportation, stakes, and all other incidentals) as being more than £300 annually.²⁰ In the 1890s, trainers charged around £2 10s a week per horse, and some trainers would also expect a percentage of a horse's winnings.²¹ Surviving training accounts from Palace House Stables at Newmarket in 1879, and 1884, indicate costs for saddler, travelling, tradesmen and telegrams. Later accounts from Kingsclere Racing Stables at the turn of the 20th century show costs for a doctor, veterinary surgeon, horse box hire, fodder, and fees paid to trial riders.²² As these figures make evident, public trainers in particular were not just 'equine sports coaches' but were also running a business.²³ Racehorse owners invested heavily in their animals, relying on the trainer to produce short-term success on the racecourse, which they hoped would eventually translate to long-term profitability at stud.²⁴

Despite the public image that trainers may have projected with their fine-furnished homes, financial worries plagued many of them. Owners were not always reliable at paying their training bills, which sometimes caused trainers significant financial hardships.²⁵ Some trainers also had large overheads; Richard

¹⁹ Jeffrey G. Williamson, "The Structure of Pay in Britain, 1710-1911," *Research in Economic History*, 7 (1982): 1-54.

²⁰ R. H. Copperthwaite, *The Turf, the Racehorse, and Stud Farm* (London: Day and Son Limited, 1865), 43-44.

²¹ "Circular Notes," *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 15 October, 1892, 162. Alfred E. T. Watson, *The Turf* (London: Lawrence and Bullen Ltd., 1898), 151.

²² Joseph Hayhoe account, 1879 and Alfred Hayhoe account, 1884, Rotschild Archives, 000/1373/8/9. Kingsclere Training Stables, accounts, 1904 – 1917, Nottingham University Special Collections, P1F10/3/5.

²³ For a detailed analysis of this, see: Mike Huggins, "Nineteenth-Century Racehorse Stables in their Rural Setting: A Social and Economic Study," *Rural History*, 7, no. 2 (October 1996): 177 – 190.

²⁴ Cecil, *Stable Practice*, 77.

²⁵ Lambton, *The Men & Horses I Have Known*, 135-136. Day, *The Racehorse in Training*, 216-217.

Marsh, trainer for King Edward VII, recalled in his memoirs that he had to make £13,000 annually on his establishment just to break even.²⁶ Training racehorses was a stressful job, because one wrong choice or poor judgment could quickly end a horse's career before it had even begun. Prior successes were no guarantee for a trainer's long-term fortune. One well-known trainer in later years referred to training as 'a losing game' and worried about having enough money to live on in his old age.²⁷ A further trainer, writing under the guise of anonymity, lamented, 'the forage bills are dreadfully heavy, the rent has to be paid, and a tribe of hungry boys at 25s. a week is a continual drain on your banking account...'²⁸

By 1914, there were an estimated 20,000 Thoroughbred racehorses in the United Kingdom, of which 6,500 were in training stables. Their total value was estimated to be £5.5 million. Trainers employed a total of approximately 3,500 stable lads, and a further 238 apprentices. There were 290 trainers working in England.²⁹ The majority of horses were trained in 'public or semi-public establishments,' many of which housed forty or more horses in training at any one time.³⁰ Racehorse trainers, and training yards as enterprises, were vital cogs in the racing industry which developed during the 19th century.

Racehorse Training Methods

As discussed in the previous chapter, during the 19th century, racehorses were being started under saddle at a young age, for the reason that it enabled people

²⁶ Richard Marsh, *A Trainer to Two Kings* (London: Cassell, 1925), 95.

²⁷ Letter dated Oct. 22, 1905 from Alfred Hayhoe to Leopold de Rothschild, Rothschild Archive.

²⁸ Alfred E. T. Watson, *The Racing World and Its Inhabitants* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1904), 32.

²⁹ The Value of Racing to the Country, 1914, and Letter from Richard Ord, June 3, 1915, both Lonsdale Papers, Carlisle Record Office, D/Lons/L9/2/58

³⁰ Frederick Adye, "Reminiscences— The Trainer and His Art," *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 11 January, 1913, 840.

‘to be assured as soon as possible, whether the young stock are probably to repay the vast expense and solicitude, attendant upon training and the business of the Course...’³¹ Racehorse owners expected to see a return on their investment, and the way to lose the least amount of money was to train horses early to see whether they were any good, and enter them in races as soon as possible. Trials, which were ‘mock’ races on home ground against another horse of a known calibre, allowed the trainer and racehorse owner to evaluate a horse’s fitness and potential, and determine which races to prepare the horse for. A horse that performed particularly poorly in a trial might be discarded from the training program, thereby saving the owner from spending money on an animal which would not make a successful racehorse.³²

While previously horses did not start training in earnest until they were four years or older, by the 1830s, even yearlings were running races.³³ This meant that trainers had to work with much younger, less mature animals than they had needed to before—a change that brought potential difficulties with it. The sporting writer Charles Apperley (pen name ‘Nimrod’) remarked upon the problems trainers faced as a result of this change in his classic essay *The Turf*, first published in 1833 as a review of the first volume of Richard Darvill’s racehorse training manual. Apperley stated:

‘The most difficult points in the trainer’s art have only been called into practice since the introduction of one, two, and three-year old stakes... Saving and excepting the treatment of doubtful legs, whatever else he has to do in his stable is comparatively trifling to the act of bringing *a young*

³¹ William Henry Scott, *British Field Sports* (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1820), 520.

³² Richard Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Racehorse in a Series of Rough Notes*, Vol. 2, (London: James Ridgway, 1840), 342 – 365. ‘Cootherstone’, “On Training the Race-Horse,” *New Sporting Magazine*, 8, no. 45 (Sept. 1844), 183 – 186. Cecil, *Stable Practice*, 122 – 12124. Copperthwaite, *The Turf and the Racehorse*, 52 – 58.

³³ “The Progress of Racing in England,” *New Sporting Magazine*, 2, no. 10 (Feb. 1832), 286.

one quite up to the mark and *keeping him there till he is wanted*... The immense value, again, which a *very promising* young colt now attains in the market adds greatly to the charge over him; and much credit is due to the trainer who brings him well through his engagements, whether he be a winner, or not.’³⁴

As these observations make clear, the practice of racehorse training was made more difficult by the younger ages at which racehorses were being trained and expected to run in races.³⁵ Furthermore, trainers frequently faced pressure from racehorse owners anxious to see their animal run in a specific race, which could result in the training process being rushed.³⁶ The increased value of young Thoroughbreds also added even greater financial risk to this endeavour, while simultaneously being the main reason why there was such a rush for a horse to make its racing debut in the first place.

Despite time limitations and the difficulty of training such young animals, there is evidence to suggest that trainers were successful at adjusting their methods in

³⁴ Charles Apperley, “ART. IV.-A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Race-horse,” *The Quarterly Review*, 49, no. 98, (July 1833): 391.

³⁵ Recent scientific studies have shown that controlled exercise of young racehorses causes increased bone density and that conditioning exercise in Thoroughbreds from 18 months of age had a positive impact on their soundness during their two and three-year old racing careers. See: A. Boyde and E. C. Firth, “Musculoskeletal responses of 2-year-old Thoroughbred horses to early training. 8 Quantitative back-scattered electron scanning electron microscopy and confocal fluorescence microscopy of the epiphysis of the third metacarpal bone,” *New Zealand Veterinary Journal* Vol. 53, Issue 2, 2005, p. 123-132, and C. W. Rogers et al. “Evaluation of a new strategy to modulate skeletal development in racehorses by imposing track-based exercise during growth: The effects on 2- and 3-year-old racing careers,” *Equine Veterinary Journal*, 40, no. 2 (March 2008): 119–127. Unfortunately, there do not appear to be contemporary scientific studies which investigate the impact of training regimes on young horses’ behaviour, nor studies which investigate the effect of early training and racing on long-term soundness which would also be of interest to the historical narrative.

³⁶ Copperthwaite, *The Turf and the Racehorse*, 155.

response to the sport's new timetable. Although two-year-old horses were supposedly 'easily distinguishable in a trainer's stable-string from undrawn rough-coated raw material' in the 1820s, by the 1850s, the training and management of two-year-olds had changed to such an extent that they reportedly resembled three-year-old horses in their appearance, so that it was difficult to visually distinguish between them.³⁷ Changes in training methods and management, which the changes at which horses started racing necessitated, also brought about a visible change in how young racehorses looked. Furthermore, while it had previously been commonplace for racehorses to be rested for a few months in the winter, and to sometimes be returned to their owner's private stables at home, by the mid 19th century horses tended to remain in training year-round, although winter weather usually curtailed training to some extent.³⁸ When the ground was poor, trainers preferred their horses to take exercise on a straw bed (a cushioned riding ring created out of straw in a nearby paddock). The horses then returned to regular exercise in the spring. On the first ride out, the horses were likely to be very fresh, and riding them on the straw bed for an hour before taking them out on the downs reduced the risk of the stable lads being thrown.³⁹

The adoption of horse-drawn horse vans in the 1830s, and later use of the railways for the same purpose, also transformed racehorse training. While previously, racehorses were walked for twenty or more miles each day (often for a number of days at a time) to reach different racecourses around the country, from the mid 19th century, racehorses could be transported much more quickly,

³⁷ 'Goldfinch', "Racing in 1825 and Racing in 1850," *The Sporting Magazine*, February 1851, 146-147.

³⁸ John Lawrence, *A Philosophical and Practical Treatise on Horses, and on the moral duties of man towards the Brute Creation*, Vol. 1 (London: H. D. Symonds, 1802), 237 – 238. Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Racehorse*, Vol. 1, 22, 96, 291.

³⁹ 'Nimrod', "A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Racehorse," 391. "Humours of the Straw Bed," *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 17 January, 1891, 606 – 607.

meaning that they spent more time in training stables doing targeted conditioning training under direct supervision of the trainer, and less time walking long distances with the sole purpose of moving them.⁴⁰ Although historians have argued that the railways were not the primary cause why racehorses began to compete in more races during the 19th century, the impact of being able to keep horses at their home training stables for longer periods and transport them more quickly and with less fatigue (especially considering the shift in racehorse ages) was undeniably positive for trainers.⁴¹

During the first half of the 19th century, racehorse training consisted of four ‘cornerstones’: exercise, sweating, feeding, and physic (the giving and effects of purgatives).⁴² Racehorse management, therefore, was holistic, encompassing feeding, health and exercise regime, and it was significantly influenced by humoral theory. Trainers could, by observing the horse’s body and behaviour, see how the horse was responding to the training regime, and adjust training accordingly.

‘As the condition of the horse progresses, the diminution of fat will render the muscles of the body more and more apparent when in motion;

⁴⁰ Lawrence, *A Philosophical and Practical Treatise on Horses*, Vol. 1, 238.

Cotherstone, “On Training the Racehorse,” *New Sporting Magazine*, 7, no. 40 (April 1844): 269 – 273. “Doncaster Races, 1849,” *The Illustrated London News*, September 15, 1849, 184. John Kent, *Racing Life of Lord George Cavendish Bentinck M.P.* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1892), 61 – 79. “Boxing Yearlings for Newmarket,” *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, October 8, 1892, 133.

⁴¹ John Tolson & Wray Vamplew, “Derailed: Railways and Horse- Racing Revisited,” *The Sports Historian*, 18, no. 2 (1998): 34-49. John Tolson & Wray Vamplew, “Facilitation not Revolution: Railways and British Flat Racing 1830–1914,” *Sport in History*, 23, no. 1 (2003): 89-106.

⁴² While all four of these cornerstones overlapped, it would be impossible to examine them all at once. Therefore, this chapter will focus on exercise, physic and sweating, while feeding will be examined in detail in the following chapter. Due to physic’s many uses, it will also be discussed in later chapters.

the crest will become firmer to the touch, and the flesh generally will feel harder and more resisting as the state of the system improves; the eye, instead of being dull and languid, will become lively and full of fire; the listless motion in the stall, when made to shift from side to side, will be exchanged for the agile spring; the appetite will become more keen, and the temper, perhaps, a little more fractious: in short, every action, even the motion of the ears backwards and forwards, will exhibit more and more alertness, and fire and energy will gradually usurp the place of listlessness and inactivity. By such signs shall the observing trainer know that his plan of treatment is working well.⁴³

Racehorses, therefore, could communicate to trainers how effective the training regime was, via their bodies.

By categorising racehorses according to different visual, physical and biological criteria, trainers determined what was required to bring certain horses into racing condition. Trainers also relied on visual indicators of health and condition, as well as touching the horse, to determine how each animal was fairing. The sporting writer Harry Hieover gave the most concise description of this, saying:

‘Judging by his appearance, feel, feeding, wind and vigour, and whether a horse is improving or going back in his work and sweats, is the great point in which the judgement of a trainer is shewn. This is easily detected by the experienced trainer... He may know that he is treating him judiciously as a race-horse; but the horse, by the symptoms I have mentioned, will best tell him whether he is being treated (as a particular horse) judiciously or otherwise, and this, nothing but experience in the alterations of that particular horse can teach the trainer of him.’⁴⁴

Racehorse training, therefore, relied heavily on ‘reading’ the racehorse’s body for visual signs in the animal’s physical appearance and behaviour to determine

⁴³ Chiron, “Thoughts on Racing Stock,” *The Sporting Review*, December, 1842, 429.

⁴⁴ Harry Hieover, “A Few Remarks on Training Race-Horses,” *New Sporting Magazine*, 11, no. 54 (April 1846): 261.

the effectiveness of the training regime. This goes some way to explain why nearly all racehorse training manuals and trainer's biographies refer to training as an 'art', or something which could not be entirely learned from a book. To 'read' an animal's body required tacit knowledge that trainers acquired throughout their careers.⁴⁵

While previously racehorses were exercised twice a day, by the 1840s, exercise patterns had changed, so that horses were typically only exercised once daily for a period of two and a half to three hours.⁴⁶ The training regime tended to be divided into first, second and third preparations. The first preparation introduced lengthy walking exercise, as well as limited canter work.⁴⁷ At the culmination of the first preparation, the horse was given physic and rested for a few days with the goal of bringing the horse's body into balance, before starting on the second preparation, which introduced more fast galloping work, and sweating at regular intervals. The third preparation, which was slightly more intense than the second, was targeted to bring the horse into peak condition for a trial or a race. As with the first preparation, the second and third preparations were each punctuated by a course of physic, which was accompanied by brief rest from exercise, in order to 'refresh' the horse's body from the stresses of the training regime.⁴⁸ Racehorse training, therefore, consisted of modifying the horse's body to prepare it for a trial or race without throwing the horse's body too much out of balance, and pausing training to restore that balance at set intervals.

Physic was one of the cornerstones of racehorse training. This long-established practice, which was also in regular use as a treatment for a variety of ailments,

⁴⁵ For more about tacit knowledge and 'craft coaching' in 19th century human athlete training see: Dave Day and Tegan Carpenter, *A History of Sports Coaching in Britain: Overcoming Amateurism* (Routledge: London, 2015), 20-53.

⁴⁶ Samuel Chifney, *Genius Genuine* (London: Shury, 1804), 164. Cotherstone, "On Training the Racehorse," *New Sporting Magazine*, 8, no. 47 (Nov. 1844), 332.

⁴⁷ Cecil, *Stable Practice*, 82 – 87.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 175 - 176

involved purging horses with aloes at regular intervals.⁴⁹ Physic was understood to reduce inflammation, purify the blood, cool the body, aid in the recovery of tired limbs, reduce fat, and improve the appetite.⁵⁰ As *The Veterinarian* concluded, ‘physic would seem to be the alpha and omega of training, and to be quite as serviceable to the Newmarket groom as to the practicing veterinarian.’⁵¹ Youatt, a senior veterinarian, stated that, ‘physic must not be omitted.’⁵² Part preventative, part cure-all, physic was so vital to racehorse training, that it was widely understood to be impossible to bring a racehorse into condition without the aid of it.

A trainer needed to have a good understanding of his horses’ constitutions to be able to administer physic appropriately. Richard Darvill, who had previously worked in a training stable before becoming a vet, considered physic to be such an important part of racehorse training that he devoted three chapters to it in his two-volume racehorse training manual. Horses were prepared for physic three to four days before administering the aloes by a change in their diet, specifically the feeding of a liquidy bran mash. This somewhat sloppy feed was understood to prepare the bowels for the physic, and make it respond better. Horses were typically kept in on the day that the physic was administered. The morning after the aloes had been given, horses were then taken out for moderate exercise, to ‘work off’ the physic. Depending on how the horses responded, they might be exercised once or twice more during the day until the physic was shown to be having the desired effect.⁵³

⁴⁹ The use of physic to treat ill health will be discussed in chapter four.

⁵⁰ Cotherstone, “On Training the Racehorse,” *New Sporting Magazine*, 9, no. 49 (January 1845): 59.

⁵¹ “Review - A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Race Horse, in a Series of Rough Notes, by R. Darvil,” *The Veterinarian*, 3, no. 28 (April 1830): 228.

⁵² William Youatt, *The Horse*, (London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1831), 53.

⁵³ Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Racehorse*, Vol. 1, 118 – 127.

Despite physic's importance, trainers needed to utilise it carefully. Darvill advised trainers to exercised caution when physicking yearlings, giving them 1-2 drachums of aloes and seeing if the body responded as desired, and not giving the delicate and flighty yearlings any aloes at all. He advised trainers take the same approach with older horses, omitting physic unless absolutely necessary for delicate horses, and adjusting the quantity of aloes administered according to the horse's constitution. Too much physic could weaken the horse, thereby doing exactly the opposite of what the trainer wanted, which was to 'refresh' the animal.⁵⁴ Thus, a trainer's ability to assess his horses accurately was vital if physic was going to be effective.

Although physic was a standard part of training (scarce archival documents from racehorse trainers mention the utility of physic, and horses being in physic), it was not without its critics. Too great a quantity of aloes could have a devastating effect on the animal, and writers of the period cautioned that horses had died as a result of over-enthusiastic physicking. In 1810, the veterinary surgeon John Lawrence was critical of trainers who 'always fancy the body of the horse abounds with noxious humours.'⁵⁵ Others felt that trainers tended to physic their horses too severely, and that this had a long-term debilitating effect on the animal.⁵⁶

Sweating, a further cornerstone of racehorse training in the first half of 19th century, involved galloping the horse for a number of miles under a weight of heavy blankets, before bringing it into a purpose-built 'rubbing down house' near the training ground and piling further blankets on the animal to induce perspiration. Once sweat was running off the animal, the blankets were removed and sweat scraped off the animal before putting on a lighter weight of dry

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 107 – 154. Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Racehorse*, Vol. 2, 216 – 220.

⁵⁵ John Lawrence, *A Philosophical and Practical Treatise on Horses, and on the moral duties of man towards the Brute Creation*, Vol. 2, 3rd ed. (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1810), 246 – 247.

⁵⁶ Chiron, "Thoughts in Racing Stock," *The Sporting Review*, October, 1842, 277 – 282.

blankets.⁵⁷ This process was thought to remove superfluous flesh or fat from the racehorse; of particular concern was fat in the muscles and around the organs, which was understood to impede performance. Furthermore, because the animal underwent a great exertion in the process, which made it inhale and exhale deeply, sweating was also understood improve a horse's wind. As with physic, the logic behind sweating was closely tied to humoral theory.⁵⁸ Mewett's assessment of sweating in the 17th century as 'removing wastes'⁵⁹ is equally applicable to the early 19th century, although writers referred to it in slightly different ways. The goal of physic and sweating was to restore balance in the racehorse's body and remove excess fat, which impeded a horse's 'wind'.

That sweating might be distressing to horses was observed by the veterinarian John Lawrence in 1810. 'I have seen some of our hot fly-away racers,' he wrote, 'so excessively influenced by nervous affection, that their lives seemed to be one continued state of anxiety and inquietude... they know well the sweating day, and the sight of the sweating clothes gives them a fit of horrors.'⁶⁰ He suggested that horses which responded to sweating in such a manner were better off with less exercise, so that it became pleasurable to them, instead of something to be afraid of.

⁵⁷ Sweating, which is visually documented in John Doyle's series *The Life of the Racehorse* (1822), shows a boy holding a horse in a stable or rubbing down house, its back laden with blankets, while a man --presumably the trainer-- looks on. In the next print of the series, a group of boys scrape the sweat from the animal. It illustrates just how labour-intensive sweating was. The horse has an irritable expression, which corresponds with written accounts of horses' behaviour on sweating days.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Cecil's *Stable Practice*, which refers to 'oily humours': Cecil, *Stable Practice*, 111.

⁵⁹ Mewett, "From Horses to Humans," 107.

⁶⁰ John Lawrence, *A Philosophical and Practical Treatise on Horses, and on the moral duties of man towards the Brute Creation*, Vol. 1, 3rd ed. (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1810), 251-252.

Not everyone, however, believed that racehorses' changes in behaviour on their sweating days were indicative of distress, or at least, not reason enough to refrain from sweating, despite the risks involved. Although a small number of horses could potentially have been brought into racing condition without sweating them at all, for strongly constitutioned horses, sweating was widely considered an imperative.⁶¹ Darvill's training manual pointed out that even with regular extended gallops, there would be no way to get 'the waste and spare off' such a horse without regular sweats.⁶² Thus, he recommended that different horses were sweated and different intervals; a 'craving' horse (one which had a hearty appetite and was liable to gain weight easily) might need to be sweated as frequently as three times in 14 days, while a flighty horse would need little to no sweating at all.

Darvill's account of racehorse behaviour on sweating days, first published in 1829, corresponded with Lawrence's observations; a trainer could see a change in racehorses' behaviour on sweating days, which led Darvill to conclude that horses were aware of what was going to happen to them. Horses could pick up on this from slight changes in the routine overnight, and when their sweaters (or blankets) were brought into the stables in the morning. '[S]ome of the strong craving horses will stretch out their legs or their carcasses, others empty their intestines or bladders' he wrote, 'while some others, are the more delicate ones, may be seen trembling, and some may have a little palpitation of the heart.'⁶³ The stronger horses quickly got over their apprehension, he said, while the more nervous ones tended to remain scared for longer. Because of this, they had to be treated especially patiently and kindly. Darvill stated that such horses tended to settle down once they were outdoors and taking exercise. Darvill also observed that craving horses tended to require a lot of coaxing to go at the so-termed

⁶¹ Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Racehorse*, Vol. 2, 168. Cecil, *Stable Practice*, 109 – 116.

⁶² Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Racehorse*, Vol. 1, 156-157.

⁶³ Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Racehorse*, Vol. 2, 271.

‘sweating pace,’ and sometimes necessitated the boy who was riding such a horse to make use of his whip. Some horses, however, were apt to ‘lose their tempers’ when being sweated, suggesting that these animals created problems for the people riding and handling them.⁶⁴

Although Darvill made mention of horses ‘pulling up sound’ after their sweating gallops (indicating that some animals pulled up lame), and also gave detailed descriptions of how the various class of yearlings were to be sweated, he did not indicate a higher risk of injury or unsoundness occurring as a result of sweating such young horses.⁶⁵ This may well be because he advised that horses took sweating gallops of varying lengths, depending on their age; a yearling might only have been galloped for two miles in sweaters, while an older horse of five or six years would sometimes be galloped for five miles.⁶⁶ Joseph Butler, who wrote detailed letters to his employer the Earl of Lonsdale, advocated sweating young horses ‘in the warmest part of the day’ with ‘a very light boy [on his back], so as to put the Flesh off without labour to the Sinews...’⁶⁷ It is evident that, although sweating was perceived to be an indispensable element of bringing a horse into racing condition, each trainer readily adjusted how a horse was sweated and how frequently according to a variety of factors.

When racehorse training began to shift towards training younger racehorses in the early 19th century, some training practices started to attract criticism. In 1818, the *Sporting Magazine* ran a reader letter titled ‘On Severe Training’, which condemned how two-year-olds and yearlings were being trained. The writer attributed the high number of horses which broke down during training to a system in which young animals were ‘doomed to undergo a course of training as

⁶⁴ Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Racehorse*, Vol. 1, 262, 270-271.

⁶⁵ Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Racehorse*, Vol. 2, 230 – 330.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 270.

⁶⁷ Letter written by Joseph Butler, March 25, 1811, Cumbria Archives, D/Lons/L9/2/7.

severe as horses of five years old.’⁶⁸ Much the same was voiced in 1821; a ‘Young Sportsman’ cautioned against racehorses being ‘literally trained off their legs’. Although he felt that sweating was ‘absolutely necessary to getting a horse in racing condition’, he recommended exercising caution, especially as the horses were entering training as yearlings. Sweats, which he stated sometimes took place as frequently as every five days for a distance of between four and six miles under a weight of heavy blankets and a rider, were liable to cause damage to the horse’s legs, and sometimes its temper.⁶⁹ He also criticised trainers for being ‘too systematic’ and ‘too guided by custom’, and applying the same methods without variation to all racehorses. He advocated that trainers take a horse’s temperament, condition, and constitution into consideration, and that they tailor their training program accordingly.⁷⁰

Samuel Chifney, who was a former jockey, believed that the Newmarket-based practice of sweating racehorses every six days (and sometimes more frequently than that), during which horses were required to gallop over six miles under a weight of heavy blankets, and then encouraged to sweat more by the addition of further blankets after the gallop had finished, was ruinous. ‘Nature,’ he cautioned, ‘cannot bear this.’⁷¹ Although Chifney was not against sweating per se, he felt that such a routine was harmful due to the pressure it placed on a horse’s tendons. He did not, however, explicitly state the age of racehorses as one of the reasons why such sweating was bad for horses, although he did imply this might increase the risk of injury. Chifney’s primary concerns were about ‘Nature’, and the negative consequences that might befall the horse’s body as a result of severe sweating. The sporting writer John Scott was certain that more horses were injured in training than on the racecourse, and that young horses’ ‘soft and expanding tendons and sinews... must necessarily be so liable to strain

⁶⁸ ‘A Subscriber’ (at Knowsley), “On Severe Training,” *The Sporting Magazine*, 52 (September 1818): 257 – 258.

⁶⁹ ‘A Young Sportsman’, “On Training,” *The Sporting Magazine*, 57 (January 1821): 170-171.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁷¹ Chifney, *Genius Genuine*, 163-165.

and injury.’ Severe sweating might also result in an otherwise ‘stout and hard-feeding’ horses being ‘sweated off their stomachs and out of their spirits.’ As a result, he too favoured ‘moderation’ in sweating.⁷² In 1852, Cecil cautioned that sweating horses too much could fatigue the body and deplete a horse’s muscles as well, and that a sweating gallop had to take place on level ground to avoid damaging a horse’s legs. Another risk he warned about was the possibility of a horse breaking out in a sweat again after it had been returned to its stable, the causes of which could be the horse’s temperament, an ‘impure condition of the blood’, or a lack of fresh air in the stable.⁷³ Like physic, sweating was a ‘necessary evil’ of racehorse training – essential yet perilous. The risks posed by sweating increased further as the ages of horses in training decreased. Trainers needed to exercise caution, lest sweating’s benefits backfire and harm the horse’s body instead of improving its condition. From the mid-1850s, however, a new fad enjoyed a wave of publicity, and horse racing was not immune to its potential to make risky sweating gallops a thing of the past.

The Turkish Bath was popularised by Dr Richard Barter, a medical doctor from Cork in Ireland, who built the first Turkish Bath in the British Isles in 1856 at St. Ann’s Hill. Barter grew interested in the therapeutic value of water and steam after hearing a lecture on hydropathy in 1843, and it was the therapeutic value of the bath which was widely publicised by Barter and other advocates. From Cork, the baths spread across Ireland, and to the North of England, before spreading out across the Midlands and up into Scotland; within less than four years of Barter opening his Turkish Bath in Cork, the baths had arrived in London.⁷⁴ Barter was also a founding member of the Agricultural Society of County Cork, and his baths at St. Ann’s Hill had a farm attached to the property. There he experimented with the baths for his cattle by building them a special Turkish Bath on site.⁷⁵ Considering the extensive publicity surrounding the therapeutic

⁷² John Scott, *The Sportsman's Repository* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1845), 180.

⁷³ Cecil, *Stable Practice*, 109 – 121.

⁷⁴ Malcolm Shifrin, *Victorian Turkish Baths* (Swindon: Historic England, 2015), 7, 21-25.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 268-274.

value of Turkish Baths, and Barter's experimentation with the baths on his livestock, it is hardly surprising that people saw the possibility for the baths to have value to racehorse training.

In 1861 in a widely reprinted article, Admiral Rous, who was hugely influential in horse racing (he was known as 'the dictator of the turf') proclaimed that the Turkish Bath had the potential to revolutionise racehorse training, and make long sweating gallops under heavy blankets a thing of the past. Rous believed it could cure all manner of equine diseases, and save many horses' legs from injury, but was sure that 'old-fashioned trainers' would dismiss his suggestion.⁷⁶ At the time of Rous's writing, however, there was widespread experimentation with the Turkish Bath's application to racehorse training already taking place. The veterinary surgeon Joseph Gamgee reported that he had visited a number of trainers in the north of the country, and that the verdict was still out on its efficacy as a training tool.⁷⁷ The fact that Gamgee was observing this less than a month after Rous's article was published, suggests that racing stables had built Turkish Baths some time before Rous publicly advocated for their use. Earlier reports in *Bell's Life* confirm this; multiple stables at Newmarket had built or were in the process of building one.⁷⁸ Stables at Tugill and Middleham, Yorkshire had done the same.⁷⁹ Scarcely a week went by between the end of 1860 and the middle of 1861 without at least one report of a new bath at a training stable. Trainers were investing heavily in this new tool, which might make racehorse training less risky, and sweating gallops obsolete.

⁷⁶ Admiral Rous, "On the Roman Bath as Applicable to Training Racehorses," *Baily's Monthly Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, no. 14, 1 April, 1861, 363 – 370.

⁷⁷ Joseph Gamgee, "The Turkish Bath for Training Purposes," *New Sporting Magazine*, June 1861; 246; p. 474 - 477

⁷⁸ "The Turf," *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, January 13, 1861, 4. "The Turf," *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, February 10, 1861, 4.

⁷⁹ "The Turf," *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, December 02, 1860, 4.

"The Turf," *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, December 23, 1860, 4. "Our Van," *Baily's Monthly Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, December 1, 1860, 159-160.

The swift-growing popularity of the Turkish bath as a training tool was derided by the sporting press and medical journals alike. Referred to as a ‘quackery,’ a ‘melting shop’ and a ‘sham’ by some, many cautioned that it would never replace sweating gallops, and that the bath had already claimed the lives of some racehorses.⁸⁰ For all the scorn it received, at least some of the trainers conducted their tests of the Turkish bath in quite a methodical manner. One trainer reportedly sweated one horse according to the ‘old’ system, and another using the Turkish bath, and concluded that the horse sweated in the Turkish bath lost 2lbs more than that under the old system, without any risk of the horse becoming lame in the process.⁸¹ An 1866 manual includes a plan for a Turkish bath and instructions of how to use it. In his memoir, the Duke of Portland recalled that his trainer Matthew Dawson had a Turkish bath installed when he took over the Heath House establishment, although it ended up being mostly used by the jockey Fred Archer instead of the horses it was originally built for, because the trainer discovered that it made the horses liable to catch a cold.⁸²

The Turkish bath evidently did not completely go out of fashion, but it was never established as a mainstay of racehorse training like Rous had imagined. Shifrin has indicated that the main problems which the Turkish bath faced in racing were due to Admiral Rous’s claims which implied that racehorses could be trained purely by using the baths, instead of as therapeutic tools which Dr. Barter had envisaged, but this explanation feels too simplistic because it fails to take into account the importance of sweating as a cornerstone of racehorse training.⁸³

⁸⁰ “The Turkish Bath,” *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, March 24, 1861, 1. “The Turkish Bath for Training Purposes,” *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, April 7, 1861, 1. “The Roman Bath for Horses,” *The Lancet*, 1 (April 13, 186): 373.

⁸¹ “The Turf,” *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, March 3, 1861, 4.

⁸² This is probably the only equine Turkish bath that still survives today in a recognisable state in this country. Although it has since been converted into stables, the original stove used to heat the bath is still in place, and the archway between the rooms is still visible in the brickwork. See: The Duke of Portland, *Memories of Racing and Hunting* (London: Faber & Faber, 1935), 87.

⁸³ Shifrin, *Victorian Turkish Baths*, 270.

Widespread recognition that sweating gallops posed a risk to horses' soundness, which were only exacerbated by yearlings and two-year old horses being trained and prepared for races, made sweating a 'necessary evil'. The Turkish bath presented a less risky alternative to sweating, which, when experimented with, failed to replace sweating gallops in the end. As will become clear in the next section of this chapter, racehorse training had undergone significant changes in the mid-19th century, and sweating was one of those 'cornerstones' of racehorse training which fell out of fashion. The Turkish bath 'fad' is evidence of an experimental phase in racehorse training methods, when trainers tried to adjust to the new form of horse racing which had gained such great popularity that it was rapidly eradicating longer-distance races for older horses. Racehorse trainers faced new challenges training young horses for shorter sprint-races. As a result, they experimented with new techniques, such as the Turkish bath, which might give them the competitive edge.

'Modern' Training Methods in the late 19th Century

By the late 19th century, racehorse training methods had changed considerably, although the primary goals of ascertaining each horse's potential and then preparing it to run in specific races remained the same. Racehorse trainers and sporting writers looked back with wonder and bemusement at the 'old ways' and expressed their pride in how much racehorse training methods had improved. Looking back, the Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire and W. G. Craven concluded that the 'forcing system of training' developed in the 1860s and at the time of their writing (1886) had reached 'the highest pitch of perfection. The trainers of old, however had supposedly 'treated all their horses alike, and subjected them to a Spartan discipline' which had a detrimental effect on many of them.⁸⁴ Yet, as has already been established earlier, all evidence shows that trainers had been assessing horses according to age, constitution, temperament and condition, and tailoring the training regime to suit these varying criteria throughout the 19th century. Perhaps the greater truth was entailed in the authors' assertion that

⁸⁴ Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire, et. al., *Racing and Steeple-Chasing*, 205, 207.

trainers had adapted and perfected training yearlings and two-year-olds in a way that their predecessors were incapable of doing. What these changes in training methods were, beyond ‘forcing’ yearlings in their feeding and management so that they visually resembled more mature horses, the authors did not elaborate upon.⁸⁵

Sweating had, however, gradually ceased being the cornerstone of racehorse training that it once had been. Various texts state that the Yorkshire-based trainer Tom Dawson was the first to abandon it, or perhaps the Newmarket-based trainer Robert Robson.⁸⁶ By 1857, ‘heavy-clothed sweats’ were reported to be only deployed for horses which were particularly prone to laying on fat.⁸⁷ The Turkish bath was merely an experiment, likely abandoned because it had little positive effect, and in some cases the results were thoroughly negative.⁸⁸ With sweating gallops posing a considerable risk for trainers, who were also under increasing time pressure to get their horses fit to run (and Turkish baths tested and proven to be an ineffective shortcut) sweating racehorses simply didn’t fit the needs of trainers in the way it once had. In 1882, the *Sporting Times* proclaimed, ‘Sweating is now almost as obsolete at Newmarket as races over the Beacon Course.’⁸⁹ As the trainer Sam Darling pointed out in 1914, ‘It is seldom a trainer sweats his horses now, everything is done with such a rush.’⁹⁰ William Day remarked that, ‘in these lenient days, few would like to revert to so extreme a practice, whilst the danger of laming the animals would deter the boldest training from its adoption, even though he should think it might be beneficial in some respects.’⁹¹ Thus, time pressure, the risk of horses becoming injured, and more a

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 217

⁸⁶ Francis Lawley, “Trainers – New and Old,” *Baily’s Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, no. 363, May 1, 1890, 319-320. Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire, et. al., *Racing and Steeple-Chasing*, 209- 210.

⁸⁷ The Druid, *Post and Paddock* (London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1857), 25.

⁸⁸ Day, *The Racehorse in Training*, 89-90.

⁸⁹ “Turf Celebrities— Mr Robert Robson,” *The Sporting Times*, 8 July 1882, 2.

⁹⁰ Darling, *Sam Darling’s Reminiscences*, 209 – 210.

⁹¹ Day, *The Racehorse in Training*, 77.

‘lenient’ approach to training all played a role in sweating’s decline. Although some human-athlete training manuals the 1860s and 70s had debunked sweating as a training practice, because sweat was not (as had previously been assumed) fat being ‘melted’ due to heat, there is little evidence that racehorse trainers abandoned the practice for this reason.⁹²

Physic, another formerly vital cornerstone of racehorse training, remained in use, but was utilised by trainers in a different way, and with far less frequency. The trainer William Day recommended using physic for weight loss and to stop the horse from gaining too much weight when the amount of exercise it took had to be reduced due to injury or poor weather conditions. He assured his readers that, ‘Physic is undoubtedly an essential in training,’ but cautioned that horses must not all be physicked in the same way, because this could endanger their lives.⁹³ John Porter advised that twice-weekly bran mashes (a moist feed made from wheat bran) made physic unnecessary, except ‘in the spring before commencing work.’⁹⁴ Racehorse owner George Chetwynd stated that ‘purgatives in my opinion should always be avoided as much as possible... there are other means of freshening up your horses which are preferable.’⁹⁵ This was a decidedly different view and application of physic than had previously been the case.

Although physic was used less frequently in the latter years of the 19th century (and in some cases not at all), it continued to be relied upon by some, if not many trainers into the 20th century, primarily on a case-by-case basis. The trainer George Lambton continued to utilise physic in much the same fashion in the early 20th century; a letter from January, 1905 states that his horses ‘had a good rest, and a dose of physic.’⁹⁶ A veterinary report for the horses at Palace House

⁹² See for example: Archibald MacLaren, *Training in Theory and Practice* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1866), 31 – 32.

⁹³ Day, *The Racehorse in Training*, 79 – 80, 102 – 103.

⁹⁴ Porter, *Kingsclere*, 221.

⁹⁵ Sir George Chetwynd, *Racing Reminiscences and Experiences of the Turf*, vol. 2 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1891), 113 – 114.

⁹⁶ Letter from George Lambton, January 29, 1905, Knowsley Hall Archives.

Stables in Newmarket indicates that one horse was ‘under physic,’ although it does not specify the reason why. Physic became an addition to the trainer’s ‘toolkit’ instead of a regular, repeated application that formed a foundation of racehorse training practice. The decline of physic and sweating as cornerstones of racehorse training might be seen as evidence that humoral theory had, by the late 19th century, ceased to be the guiding principle of racehorse training that it once was. Yet, the survival of physic into the 20th century, and the fact that no training manuals or trainers’ autobiographies from the late 19th and early 20th century state that sweating or physic didn’t perform the functions that trainers once thought they did, suggest that these changes in practice were motivated by factors other than a change in trainers’ understanding of the equine body.

With physic and sweating no longer regularly scheduled aspects of training routines, racehorse training had become even more individualised than it had been before. While previously training texts had recommended dividing horses into different categories for training, and then adapting the training regime to suit each horse’s needs, late 19th century training manuals were explicit about the need for an individualised training regime. As William Day pointed out,

‘In a stable of fifty horses or less, it may be said that no two of them will thrive on the same treatment. When it is so, it is the exception. They differ in many ways: in constitution, in temper, in variability of health, in soundness and in appetite, as well as in other things; and each individual case should be studied and treated accordingly.’⁹⁷

Horses were no longer rested during the winter months, and those which were seen to have Derby potential would continue to be exercised during the winter as much as the weather would permit. *Racing & Steeplechasing* recommended that ‘exercise would not exceed two or three canters daily at something less than half-speed’ which would ‘have the effect of keeping him clean in his inside’.⁹⁸ Frozen ground in the winter, however, saw most horses’ exercise limited to slow work

⁹⁷ Day, *The Racehorse in Training*, 104.

⁹⁸ Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire et. al., *Racing and Steeplechasing*, 150.

on a straw bed, regardless of how much it inconvenienced the trainer's tight training schedule.⁹⁹ As spring came around again, three-year-old horses that were expected to run in shorter races were trained much the same as two-year-old horses were, whereas those horses being preparing for longer Classic races like the Derby needed to gradually build up the lengths of their gallops. As a result, preparing horses for these races took longer than those running shorter races.¹⁰⁰

Racehorse trainers continued to rely on visual and tactile observations of each horse in their care to determine its health, condition and progress. In order to facilitate regular inspection of each horse, daily routines were built into the schedule. Once or twice daily, trainers performed their rounds— inspecting each horse in turn, usually in front of the head lad and stable lads, and, occasionally, visiting owners and other distinguished guests.¹⁰¹ Although trainers clearly had observed the horses in their care and regular intervals previously, formal daily rounds were rarely mentioned as a stable routine in the early 19th century, and therefore appear to be a later custom.¹⁰² During the rounds, trainer John Porter recommended to, 'carefully look [the horses] over, one by one, to thoroughly examine them, handling their legs and feet and otherwise ascertaining by the minutest observation that no hard has come to any of them from the morning's work.'¹⁰³ Sam Darling stated that, 'At stable time every leg is felt, and every horse thoroughly examined. Orders are given to the head man for any treatment for trouble I may have found, either high temperature or bad tendon, or anything that may have turned up since the morning.'¹⁰⁴ The competency of the only female trainer working in the 19th century was presented to readers by the fact that, 'her small hand can discover as much as any other trainer's when she runs it

⁹⁹ ISDN straw bed article.

¹⁰⁰ Day, *The Racehorse in Training*, 83.

¹⁰¹ Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire, et. al., *Racing and Steeple-Chasing*, 100. Watson, *The Racing World and Its Inhabitants*, 48

¹⁰² Cotherstone, "On Training the Race-Horse," *New Sporting Magazine*, 8, no. 47 (November 1844), 330 – 331.

¹⁰³ Porter, *Kingsclere*, 220.

¹⁰⁴ Darling, *Sam Darling's Reminiscences*, 202.

down a horse's leg.'¹⁰⁵ Such descriptions of trainers' rounds illustrate how the horse's body communicated health and condition, and that physical, tactile interaction was a crucial part of training; knowledgeable hands, which could spot an ailment before it became a serious problem, were the mark of a skilled trainer. A trainer's hands could read the equine body, and notice the slightest change in each individual horse between one day and the next. Trainers continued to rely on horses communicating their health and condition via their bodies. It was, after all, the only way to overcome the horse-human communication barrier inherent in training animal athletes.

Beyond visual and tactile interaction with the horses in their care to gage their health and condition, a number of trainers had also begun to rethink the use of whips and spurs on their horses during races. The successful trainer Tom Cannon stated:

‘No one knows what a number of two-year-olds are ruined by the whip and the spurs boys are always using. It's cruel, and besides it does no good at all. See a two-year-old come out on the course, and go down to the post listening and looking about him. He ran last week, and he was hided, and he was out the day before yesterday, and here he is once more, and he knows that he's got to run and to be hided again. What's the consequence? He's too nervous to put out his full powers; and then when he goes back to his stable, timorous and trembling, he won't eat, and, what's worse, he won't drink; and so he goes off when he's never had a fair chance of coming on.’¹⁰⁶

Cannon's statement recalls concerns expressed by a number of sporting writers as early as the late 18th century that racehorses were being heavily whipped and spurred during match races. While these accounts only criticised the pain being inflicted upon racehorses by such practices, Cannon's take on the matter shows a trainer considering the consequences that whipping and spurring might have on a

¹⁰⁵ “A Woman Who Trains Horses,” *Frank Leslie's Budget*, March, 1893, 89.

¹⁰⁶ “A Day With Tom Cannon,” *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 4 February, 1882, 502.

horse's behaviour and long-term performance. What Cannon's statement also implies is that whips and spurs were not being utilised when riding horses during training exercise, and that it was only during a race itself when horses were exposed to them.

The success of American racehorses in Britain at the turn of the 20th century also resulted in a number of American trainers' methods being adopted by their British counterparts. The sporting press reported with some degree of curiosity about the new fad for sand baths in the early 1900s, which British trainers had copied from the American trainer Enoch Wishard. The sand bath was an enclosure or part of a paddock that had been covered in sand. After exercise, racehorses were led one by one to the sand to have a roll before being taken back to their stables.¹⁰⁷ Watching how horses behaved in the sand bath led one writer to conclude that 'the intense enjoyment many horses show in it must be as healthy as it is undoubted.'¹⁰⁸ The introduction of the sand bath was emblematic of the broader recognition among trainers that allowing horses to 'indulge' in things like grazing after a long gallop improved the animals' demeanour.¹⁰⁹ Although these changes were widely reported as proof that trainers were now treating racehorses as 'individuals', as the previous chapter has shown, trainers and others closely connected to horse racing had been observing racehorse behaviour for the best part of a century.

¹⁰⁷ "Circular Notes," *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 20 October, 1900, 258. "Racing Stables-- Mr. T. Couthwaite, Hazel Slade House, Hednesford, Staffs.," *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 15 March 1902, 82. "A Visit to Mr. W. T. Robinson, the Foxhill Trainer," *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 11 June, 1904, 573. "Notes by 'Ranger,'" *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 20 May 1905, 411. "Famous Training Stables-- Mr. G. Saunders-Davies, Michel Grove, Sussex," *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 21 August, 1909, 1024. "At Home with a Derby Favourite-- Lomond at Wootton's Epsom Stable," *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 27 April, 1912, 357.

¹⁰⁸ Theodore Andrea Cook, *A History of the English Turf*, Vol. 3, (London: Virtue and Company, 1904), 549.

¹⁰⁹ "Quiet Horses," *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 23 January, 1904, 898.

Conclusions

To speak of a ‘revolution’ in racehorse training methods between the early and late 19th century as a number of the sporting writers of the period did, would be to somewhat overstate the changes that occurred. Trainers had been adapting training regimes to suit the different horses in their care from the beginning of the century; they categorised horses according to age, sex, constitution, and behaviour. As sprint-races for two-year-old horses grew in popularity and importance, and three-year-old races became key events in the racing year, trainers experimented and adapted already established training methods to suit the younger horses which they now had to train. Just as this change impacted how racehorses were perceived as a collective, it also had an impact on the work of trainers and the horses in their care.

Although the move towards racing younger horses over shorter distances was the greatest driver of change in training methods, racehorses were not passive in this process. The racehorse’s body indicated to the trainer and others charged with its care whether the training regime was working. The equine body was read for signs of health, condition, and likely future performance at a race. It also placed limitations upon the training regime. Aware that sweating and physic were associated with significant risks, trainers experimented with alternatives, and tailored these ‘cornerstones’ to suit each individual animal. As the fad for the Turkish bath as a training tool in the 1860s shows, racehorse trainers experimented with an alternate way of bringing horses into condition, and experimentation was sometimes unsuccessful; the Turkish bath ultimately failed because trainers realised that it could have a negative effect on the horse’s body. The development of racehorse training methods was a matter of practical necessity, determined by changes occurring within the sport, that was nevertheless guided by trainer and racehorse alike.

Trainers had been tailoring their methods to suit different horses for decades. By the late 19th century, trainers were more likely to see each horse as an individual animal which needed to be trained as such. Although this individualisation meant

that physic and sweating ceased to be the cornerstones of racehorse training that they once had been, there is little evidence to suggest that trainers ceased to apply these concepts, which stemmed from humoral theory, to their understanding racehorses' bodies. Trainers were receptive to any tools in which they perceived a potential benefit. Thus, when American horses enjoyed sudden success in England at the turn of the 20th century, trainers readily absorbed the American custom of sand baths for horses after exercise into their training regime, concluding that horses 'enjoyed' them and therefore they could do no harm.

The racehorse's body indicated to the trainer and others charged with its care whether the training regime was working. The equine body was read for signs of health, condition, and likely future performance at a race. It also placed limitations upon the training regime. As the fad for the Turkish bath as a training tool in the 1860s shows, racehorse trainers experimented with an alternate way of bringing horses into condition, the Turkish bath ultimately failed because trainers realised that it sometimes had a negative effect on the horse's body. More individualised training regimes in the late 19th century adapted to suit each individual racehorse, and required racehorse trainers to carefully assess each animal and then create a training regime specifically suited to each individual horse, and the race it was being prepared for. Thus, successful racehorse training necessitated meeting the new conditions being set by the sport, while at the same time factoring in the possibilities and limitations set by each horse's physical being. While, on the surface, the demise of training 'cornerstones' like sweating which stemmed from humoral theory might seem to suggest that trainers adopted a new way of understanding the racehorse's body, there is little evidence to suggest that such a change occurred. Physic, a further cornerstone of racehorse training guided by humourism, remained in use into the 20th century. As the next chapter will show, humourism wasn't purely an influence on training methods, but also affected how racehorses were fed.

3. Housing and Feeding the Racehorse

‘...in order to avail ourselves of the racehorse’s full power and capacity, we must take him out of the hands of nature and place him in those of art.’

‘Nimrod’ (Charles Apperley), 1833¹

The history of how racehorses were fed and kept has received relatively little attention. Architectural historian Giles Worsley, who wrote the only in-depth study of stable and riding house architecture, stated that stables greatly improved in the 19th century. He heralded the loose box as ‘the most radical innovation of the 19th century stable,’ and found that racing stables were the pioneers of keeping horses in loose boxes.² Where the history of feeding racehorses is concerned, there is only one article, which explores how recipes for horse-bread (bread which was made especially for horses) could provide an insight into the diet of the poor in Early Modern England.³ What racehorses were fed and why they were fed it remains mostly unknown. Therefore, the primary questions this chapter will aim to answer are how were racehorses fed during the 19th century and why? Secondly, why did the way racehorses were housed change during this time period? Furthermore, were the ways people understood racehorse health and behaviour influencing stable design?

¹ ‘Nimrod’, “ART. IV.-A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Race-horse,” *The Quarterly Review*, 49, no. 98, (July 1833): 390.

² Giles Worsley, “The Design and Development of the Stable and Riding House in Great Britain from the 13th century to 1914” (PhD thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, 1989), 153, 155- 156.

³ William Rubel, “English Horse-bread, 1590 - 1800,” *Gastronomica*, 6, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 40 – 51.

To answer these questions requires making connections between how the racehorse's body and its response to different sorts of foodstuffs and types of housing were understood. Bringing horses into stables gave humans complete control over what horses ate, which, in turn, was thought to influence their health and performance— both positively and negatively. Although this chapter will rely heavily on the research done by Worsley as its foundation, the primary focus will be on racehorses, and not a broader history of horse stables in the 19th and early 20th century. Worsley's history is wide reaching, and therefore only considers racehorse stabling in terms of its role in innovation, rather than its long-term usage and utility within racehorse management. There is no doubt that racehorse stabling underwent significant changes in the 19th century, but, as this chapter will reveal, these changes were considerably more complicated than purely a move from keeping horses tied up in stalls, to allowing them a little more freedom in loose boxes.⁴ Worsley's history of stable architecture seems to see the stable as a self-evident way of keeping horses; a closer examination of veterinary and other equestrian texts of the 19th century, however, shows that keeping horses in stables was understood to be fraught with health problems.

To show how racehorse stabling, feeding, and understanding of the racehorse's body interacted and influenced practice, this chapter will first explore how feeding practices changed during the 19th century. As briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, feeding was considered to be one of the cornerstones of racehorse training, which is why it is vital to understand how racehorses were fed. During the 19th century, feedstuffs were understood to be either 'heating' or 'cooling.' Looking at racehorse feeding from this angle, it becomes evident that certain types of feed were thought to have medicinal properties, and that other types of food were necessary to bring horses into racing condition, but required careful management so that they did not cause illness. As a result, racehorse trainers had to constantly monitor how horses were responding to feed. Trainers needed to create an artificial equine athlete without the animal becoming diseased.

⁴ Worsley, "The Design and Development of the Stable and Riding House."

After establishing how racehorses were fed, this chapter will then explore how stabling changed during the 19th century. Just as certain feedstuffs could bring the horse's body out of balance, stabling horses was also associated with ill health. Racehorses, which had previously been housed in tie-stalls were starting to be permanently housed in loose boxes, which had previously been used for ill or recuperating horses. Thus, preserving equine health was a significant factor in changes to stable design. As loose boxes became more widespread, two different types of loose box design emerged which had differing benefits to disease prevention and equine behavioural needs.

The diet and housing that were thought to be necessary to create a racehorse and maintain it in peak condition were fraught with associated risks, which put the horse's health in danger. Humans tried to improve racehorse stabling and feeding, without completely changing already established methods. The racehorse was an artificial, man-made construction. Maintaining the racehorse in a state of health was a constant balance between 'nature' and 'art.'

Heating and Cooling Feedstuffs

Prior to the 19th century, horse breads, made of a variety of ingredients including wheat, beans and eggs, formed a central part of the racehorse-in-training's diet alongside oats. These breads were baked and then dried, before being broken up and fed to horses along with oats. Different bread recipes were baked for different stages in a horse's training.⁵ By the 19th century, however, horse breads had fallen out of favour, and many writers of the period looked back with a mixture of scorn and bemusement at how trainers had previously fed their racehorses.

⁵ Rubel, "English Horse-bread," 40 – 51. William Merrick, *Classical Farrier* (London: Printed for the Author, 1789), 747- 770.

In the late 18th and early 19th century, horses ‘running at grass’ — that is, in paddocks with grass to eat, sometimes with a man-made shelter from the elements— were thought to be healthier than horses in stables. If their feed was supplemented with oats, they were found to ‘thrive, and perform any active labour as well as those horses kept in stables on dry food only, together with this advantage that they are not so subject to disease nor to lameness...’⁶ Yet feeding grain, especially too much grain, was not without its risks. In the late 18th century, the veterinary surgeon J. Clark cautioned that, ‘Young horses, in particular, are injured by too much feeding with grain. The blood of young animals is naturally disposed to be hot; high feeding increases this disposition, and renders them more subject to inflammatory diseases.’⁷ Clark indicated that grains were a ‘heating’ food, and that this ‘heat’ made young horses more likely to become diseased.

As has already been established in chapter two, the age range of racehorses in training decreased during the 19th century. Horses were increasingly being brought into training as yearlings and raced as two-year-olds. The racing of younger horses over shorter distances under lighter-weights was highly controversial, and the debate about the degeneration of the Thoroughbred horse simmered on throughout the 19th century. Breeders discovered that, by feeding young Thoroughbreds a grain-rich diet (despite the potential health risks), they could encourage swift growth and the appearance of early maturity which this new form of racing necessitated. Joseph Butler, the Earl of Lonsdale’s stud manager and trainer, noted that feeding foals and yearlings too many oats caused ‘much mischief’ to their constitutions. Despite this associated risk, he felt that, ‘eating corn early is a good thing for foals. It gives firmness to the limbs to stand the winter...’⁸ The veterinary surgeon John Lawrence also advocated giving

⁶ J. Clark, *A Treatise on the Prevention of Diseases Incidental to Horses* (Edinburgh: Printed for the Author, 1790), 56 – 57.

⁷ Clark, *Prevention of Diseases Incidental to Horses*, 92 – 93.

⁸ Letter from Joseph Buttler to the Earl of Lonsdale (undated, prob. 1810), Carlisle Record Office, D/Lons/L9/2/7

foals oats ‘immediately from weaning and every winter.’⁹ This way of feeding young Thoroughbreds became known as ‘forcing.’ Feeding oats carried risks, but also enabled young racehorses to appear physically mature at a younger age, and this is what horse racing now required. The sporting writer ‘Chiron’ remarked that it was unlikely two-year-old racehorses would have been capable of doing what was expected of them ‘without corn when young.’¹⁰

Once in training, oats became the staple source of nutrition for racehorses, which marked a significant change from the feeding methods described in pre-19th century texts. As previous chapters have established, racehorses were valuable animals, and every aspect of their training was carefully managed. Like racehorses’ exercise regimes, feeding was carefully controlled, and horses’ appetites monitored. The veterinary surgeon Richard Darvill recommended that horses in training ate between ‘twelve to fifteen quarts of oats per day.’¹¹ Different horses required different quantities of oats, and some were prone to refusing some of their grain. Trainers relied primarily on their own judgment of what each horse’s constitution required to estimate the ideal quantity of oats each horse should consume.¹² Racehorses were typically given between four and six feeds of grain per day, and a limited quantity of hay.¹³

While oats were the primary feedstuff for bringing racehorses into condition, it was a heating feed which could disturb the horse’s constitution. Grass, on the

⁹ John Lawrence, *A Philosophical and Practical Treatise on Horses, and on the moral duties of man towards the Brute Creation*, Vol. 1, 3rd ed. (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1810), 511 - 512

¹⁰ ‘Chiron,’ “Thoughts on Racing Stock,” *The Sporting Review*, September, 1842, 200.

¹¹ *A quart of oats weighs approximately 1 lb.*

¹² Richard Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Racehorse in a Series of Rough Notes*, Vol. 1, (London: James Ridgway, 1840), 90 – 94. Chiron, “Thoughts on Racing Stock,” 200.

¹³ C. F. Brown, *The Turf Expositor* (London: Sherwood, Gilbert and Piper, 1829), 37 – 38. Cecil, *Stable Practice* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1852), 69, 72.

other hand, could remedy the ‘mischief’ caused by heating oats and restore balance in the horse’s body; it was simultaneously food and medicine. It healed ‘most of the diseases... with more certainty and expedition than can be done by medicine.’¹⁴ The veterinary surgeon James Lawrence considered ‘an annual run, of at least six weeks at grass’ for each horse to be ‘absolutely necessary.’ This, he reasoned, was because that was the ‘natural’ state of the horse, in which the animal ‘must enjoy a superior portion of health and happiness.’ Human failure to recognise this as a necessity would ensure that any horse that was deprived of its run at grass would never be fully healthy or content.¹⁵ The veterinary surgeon William Percival recommended that ill horses ceased to be fed oats, and instead were fed bran mash, ‘vetches, lucerne, green clover, and also the various esculent roots, carrots, turnips, potatoes, &c.’¹⁶

By the 1820s, however, many trainers were moving away from the customary annual run at grass for their horses in training, in part because it would have taken too long for the animal to be brought back into racing condition afterwards.¹⁷ Darvill’s racehorse training manual from 1840 recommended that horses were always kept stabled while in training. Although he recognised that letting racehorses run at grass ‘for three or four months’ each year after the racing season was over would have ‘refreshed’ the horses’ constitutions due to ‘the pure air and green food,’ he advised against it. The problem with turning racehorses out to grass was that they would eat ‘dirt or any other stuff about the grounds’ as well as grass, which would leave the horse ‘very fat, soft and bloated... unreasonably coarse and out of form.’¹⁸ Instead, he recommended resting the horses in their stables, and feeding them freshly cut spring grass and

¹⁴ Clark, *Prevention of Diseases Incidental to Horses*, 57.

¹⁵ Lawrence, *A Philosophical and Practical Treatise on Horses*, Vol. 1, 532.

¹⁶ William Percivall, *Hippopathology, a Systematic Treatise of the Disorders and Lamenesses of the Horse*, Vol. 1, (Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longman, London, 1834), 96.

¹⁷ William Henry Scott, *British Field Sports* (London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1820), 524 - 525

¹⁸ Darvill, *Treatment and Training of the English Race Horse*, Vol 1, 95-96.

root vegetables such as carrots and turnips (a feeding practice referred to as ‘soiling’) for a period of between ten days to three weeks.¹⁹ This system gave the racehorse trainer more control over what the horse ate.

Although the custom of soiling horses marked a move away from letting horses graze at liberty, grass, and to a lesser extent root vegetables, continued to be utilised as food *and* medicine. Just as grass and root vegetables were ‘cooling,’ grains had the opposite effect. As the veterinary writer Delebere Blaine explained in 1816, ‘if we expect peculiar and unnatural exertions, we must also give unnatural powers; and we do this by our grooming and high feeding: but as this is a deviation from nature, so she always punishes it with a tendency to disease, which we again counteract by art.’²⁰ Feeding racehorses, therefore, necessitated a constant balancing act between ‘nature’ and ‘art’.

The ‘nutritive, heating provender’ given to racehorses was thought likely to cause inflammation and disturb the animal’s constitution. It was also likely to cause constipation.²¹ As a result, a periodic rest from ‘heating’ feed was required. Therefore, when racehorses exhibited signs that ‘nature’ was rebelling against the regime of exercise, management and feeding, the routine was stopped. Horses ceased being fed oats, and were ‘prepared’ for physic by being fed liquid bran mashes. ‘Physic, green meat [freshly cut grass] and rest’ were substituted, until the horse showed signs that its health had improved, when the previous regime of exercise, management and feeding were resumed.²² As established in the previous chapter, physic was a cornerstone of racehorse training for much of the 19th century, which was used at set intervals during training, to treat ill health, as well as at any time when the trainer saw signs that the horse’s body needed ‘refreshing’. Grass in the spring and autumn tended to give horses loose

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 97

²⁰ Delabere Blaine, *The Outlines of the Veterinary Art* (London: Longman, Hurst, Reese, Orme & Brown, 1816), 69.

²¹ Percivall, *Hippopathology*, Vol. 1, 96, 109.

²² ‘Nimrod,’ *Remarks on the Condition of Hunters, The Choice of Horses and Their Management* (London: M. A. Pittman, 1831), 169 – 170.

faeces, and, with other laxatives such as aloes being readily employed to keep horses healthy, grass was regarded as a 'natural' alternative to physic.²³ Feeding only grass for a few days encouraged 'the secretion of the different glands of the body,' which renewed the fluids in the body. The laxative effects of feeding grass were also understood to eradicate stiffness in a horse's legs, and refresh the horse's constitution.²⁴ Bran mash, sometimes the grass cure, or otherwise physic in the form of aloes had a purgative effect which was understood to bring the horse's body into balance once more. After physic, horses could resume eating oats and hay.²⁵

Oats and hay continued to be the main feedstuffs for racehorses into the 20th century.²⁶ Yet, changes in the ages of racehorses in training were, to some extent, causing a change in how future racehorses were fed. In 1851, the sporting writer Cecil stated that a foal's inclination to eat oats 'should be fostered by every practicable means,' as from two months old. After weaning, he expected a foal to eat 'nearly, if not quite, two quarterns of oats,' and that they would only require a 'trifling' quantity of hay.²⁷ In 1856, another sporting writer recommended that foals be offered kibbled oats as soon as a month after they were born, and that foals eating oats should be encouraged. 'Much of the success of this kind of stock depends upon their early forcing by means of corn,' he remarked. After the foal was weaned at six months old, it would then be fed 'two quarterns of kibbled-oats' as well as the summer grass it was eating which would 'keep him

²³ As discussed in the previous chapter, administering too high a dose of aloes could have devastating results. Although no texts explicitly state that grass was a risk-free alternative, one can deduce that this was a further benefit of grass physic.

²⁴ Darvill, *Treatment and Training of the English Race Horse*, Vol. 1, 99 – 100.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 94. Cecil, *The Stud Farm* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1851), 197. John Field, *An Essay on the Therapeutical Effect of Purgatives on the Horse* (London: Longman, Grown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1856), 45. W. J. Miles, *Modern Practical Farriery* (London: Gresham Publishing Company, 1875), 386.

²⁶ Prof. J. Worsley Axe, *The Horse: Its Treatment in Health and Disease*, Vol. 8 (London: Gresham Publishing Company, 1905), 303.

²⁷ Cecil, *The Stud Farm*, 88, 96.

in high flesh' that would see the foal through the winter months. He also recommended bringing young horses in at night during the winter, and increasing their rations to 'three quarters' of oats... with plenty of good sound old hay, and occasionally a few carefully-sliced carrots or swedes.'²⁸ This way of feeding, he recommended continuing into the following year, so that 'in the second summer, and as soon as there is plenty of grass, the yearling should begin to assume the appearance of the horse.'²⁹

Some breeders were evidently also experimenting supplementing foals and yearlings with cow's and donkey's milk, although opinions were split as to whether this was beneficial or not.³⁰ In 1897, foals were 'turned into a big paddock' after weaning and fed 'three meals a day of good hard oats, with some cut-up carrots and occasionally a dose of linseed oil.'³¹ This system of feeding young racehorses was deemed to be necessary because racehorses were brought into training, and ran races when only two or three years old.³² A large, fat yearling was also expected to fetch more money at auction, which probably encouraged breeders to feed future racehorses a lot of grain from an early age.³³

While the age shift within racing had a noticeable impact on how youngstock were fed during the 19th century, racehorses in training continued to be fed in a relatively similar manner throughout this time period, despite the decline in popularity of an annual run at grass. Writing in 1880, the trainer William Day stated his firm belief in the benefits of in soiling racehorses each spring. Day

²⁸ 'Stonehenge', *Manual of British Rural Sports* (London: G. Routledge & Co., 1856), 343.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 344

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 343. Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire, et. al., *Racing and Steeple-Chasing* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1893), 218.

³¹ E. Rahles Rahbula, "Embryo Derby Horses," *The Ludgate*, 4 (May 1897): 23.

³² "Thoroughbreds at School," *All the Year Round*, 23, no. 569 (Oct. 25, 1879):444. Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire, et. al., *Racing and Steeple-Chasing*, 120.

³³ 'Amphion,' "Fashionable Fatlings," *Baily's Monthly Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, Issue 179 (1 January, 1875): 184 – 190.

quoted at length from Clark's 18th century farriery manual, suggesting that trainers continued to rely on grass and soiling in much the same way they had done for the past hundred years.³⁴ Considering that grass continued to be regarded as having 'cooling' properties throughout the 19th century, there is little reason to think that oats ceased to be regarded as 'heating' during this time period.³⁵ Although soiling seemed to emerge as the preferred way of 'refreshing' racehorses, the idea of a run at grass as a way to cure illness persisted into the 20th century. By this time, however, a run at grass tended to be used as a last attempt to cure a horse, instead of an annual routine which applied uniformly to all racehorses.³⁶

From this examination of racehorse feeding, and how horse feedstuffs were understood, it becomes evident that there were two aspects to the horse-feeding philosophy which were widespread throughout the 19th century. Firstly, certain feedstuffs such as grass and root vegetables had nutritional and medicinal value. Secondly, horse feed fell into one of two categories: heating, or cooling. Heating feeds, which were mostly grains such as oats and beans, were regarded as necessary for most horses, especially Thoroughbred racehorses, but their heating nature meant that the horse's body was more likely to become 'heated' and therefore inflamed and ill. Cooling feedstuffs, especially grass, but also root vegetables and a liquid bran mash, 'cooled' the horse's body, and reduced inflammation. Trainers monitored horses for signs that they might need a change

³⁴ William Day, *The Racehorse in Training* (London: R. Clay, Sons and Taylor, 1880), 25.

³⁵ One only needs to visit a feed merchant today, to realise how terms such as 'heating' and 'cooling' have lingered in equestrian vocabulary. One popular pre-made feed is called 'cool mix.' Many others are described as 'non-heating' on the packaging, indicating that they do not contain oats. Feedstuffs are still divided into the categories 'heating' and 'non-heating,' although 'heating' today refers to high-energy feeds likely to make horses excitable, rather than literally heating the body.

³⁶ Frederick Tynte Warburton, *The Race Horse: How to Buy, Train, and Run Him* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, 1892), 111 – 112. Letter from George Lambton to Lord Derby, January 29, 1905, Knowsley Archives.

of feed. Feeding racehorses required a trainer's constant attention, in order to ensure that each horse could be brought into racing condition without suffering from ill health.

Stabling

As has already been discussed earlier, before young racehorses were brought into training, they tended to spend a considerable amount of their lives in paddocks. Despite the grain that supplemented their diets, they lived, to some extent at least, in an idyllic state of 'nature.' Once their training started, young racehorses were brought indoors into stables, where they remained for most of the day except while at exercise. There was a consensus among veterinary surgeons and sporting writers in the early 19th century that bringing yearlings into stables at the start of their training had negative effects on the animals. They were liable to swollen legs, 'plethora' from 'high feeding', and inflammation.³⁷ The veterinary surgeon William Percival linked moving horses into stables and bringing them into 'a truly exalted and matchless pitch of perfection' to 'the probability— nay, all but certainty—... that some part or other of the complex animal machinery will give way.' In fact, he stated nothing was more established in veterinary medicine 'than that disease is the penalty nature has attached to the domestication of the horse.'³⁸ A further veterinary surgeon, writing in 1852, said that horses kept on grass tended to experience 'less virulent' versions of inflammatory diseases than their stable kept counterparts.³⁹ Stabling racehorses posed considerable health risks.

³⁷ John Lawrence, *A Philosophical and Practical Treatise on Horses, and on the moral duties of man towards the Brute Creation*, Vol. 2, 2nd ed. (London: H. D. Symonds, 1802), 60. A. Lawson, *The Modern Farrier* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Mackenzie and Dent, 1823). Percivall, *Hippopathology*, Vol. 1, 12.

³⁸ William Percivall, *Hippopathology, a Systematic Treatise of the Disorders and Lamenesses of the Horse*, Vol. 2 (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longman, 1840), 1.

³⁹ James W. Winter, *The Horse in Health and Disease* (London: Longman & Co., 1852), 182.

Up until the 19th century, most horses in stables were kept in stalls (see fig. 1). In a stall, a horse is tied up, its head facing the outer wall of the stable building. A weight attached to the end of the tie allows the horse limited freedom of movement to turn its head and lie down. Whereas the dimensions for 18th century stalls indicate a width varying between 5'3 and 5'8, the veterinary surgeon Richard Lawrence, writing in the early 19th century, recommended stall dimensions of 6' wide.⁴⁰ Darvill, writing in 1840, also recommended 6' as the ideal width for a stall in racing stables.⁴¹ By the turn of the 20th century, however, a width of 6'6 was standard in racing stables at Newmarket.⁴²

⁴⁰ Lucy Worsley and Tom Addyman, "Riding Houses and Horses: William Cavendish's Architecture for the Art of Horsemanship," *Architectural History*, 45 (2002): 206. Richard Lawrence, *An Enquiry into the Animal Oeconomy of the Horse* (London: Printed for the Author, 1803), 146. Richard Lawrence, *The Complete Farrier and British Sportsman*, 1813, London: Thomas Kelly, p. 54

⁴¹ Darvill, *Treatment and Training of the English Race Horse*, Vol. 1, 42.

⁴² M. Horace Hayes, *Stable Management and Exercise* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1900), 229 – 230.



Fig. 1. A stall at Audley End. The horse's head faces the wall. Attached at head height are a manger and hay rack for food.

The way in which valuable horses, especially racehorses, were being housed started to change in the early 19th century. Unlike stalls, loose boxes (initially called 'loose stables') were small rooms or pens in which horses were not kept tied up all the time, and therefore had more freedom of movement (see fig. 2). They were originally recommended for horses recuperating from illnesses, but in 1802, the veterinary surgeon John Lawrence suggested that loose boxes might also be used as a preventative for ill health.⁴³ In the second edition of his *A Philosophical and Practical Treatise on Horses*, he pointed out that loose boxes

⁴³ William Taplin, *The Gentleman's Stable Directory: Or, Modern System of Farriery*, 3rd ed. Vol. 2 (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1793), 29. James White, *A Treatise of Veterinary Medicine in two vols.*, Vol. 2 (London: J. Johnson, 1808), 246. John Hinds, *Veterinary Surgery and Practice of Medicine* (London: Whittaker, Treacher & Co. 1829), 288-289, 475, 485, 518.

were already in widespread use in ‘sporting stables, with horses lamed in their sinews, or having their legs swelled and heated from work.’⁴⁴ He also remarked that when young horses were first brought into stables, their legs were prone to swelling up, but that he had observed this did not seem to afflict horses that were standing in loose boxes to the same degree.⁴⁵ Considering that there were positive healing effects from keeping horses in loose boxes, ‘why not,’ he asked, ‘make a constant custom of it as a preventive?’⁴⁶

A mere seven years later, Lawrence observed that loose boxes were increasingly in use in racing stables. Loose boxes were, he said, ‘the grand restorative of the horse, second only to a run abroad.’⁴⁷ Nine years later, William Henry Scott described loose boxes as, ‘the first and noblest of all in-door remedies.’⁴⁸ In 1829, the veterinary surgeon John Hinds stated that loose boxes calmed anxious horses.⁴⁹ Thus, loose boxes, which were initially used for horses recuperating from injuries, were now starting to be used in racing stables both for their healing *and* their preventative powers. Preserving horse health was starting to emerge as the key motivating factor for the utilisation of loose boxes, and, as has been pointed out earlier, bringing horses into stables was likely to bring about ill health. There is also a clear correlation between the increased use of loose boxes for all racehorses in training, and the move away from giving racehorses a run at grass.

As Giles Worsley pointed out, the trend towards permanently keeping horses in loose boxes came about at the same time when authors recommended making

⁴⁴ Lawrence, *A Philosophical and Practical Treatise on Horses*, Vol. 2, 41.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴⁷ John Lawrence, *The History and Delineation of the Horse, in all his Varieties* (London: Albion Press, 1809), 153.

⁴⁸ Scott, *British Field Sports*, 336.

⁴⁹ John Hinds, *Veterinary Surgery and Practice of Medicine*, Book 1, (London: Whittaker, Treacher & Co., 1829), 98.

stalls wider than they had been previously.⁵⁰ Yet, while Worsley's research into stable architecture indicates that racing stables were the instigator of using loose boxes as general horse housing, this does not mean, however, that stalls were rapidly phased out in all training stables. Loose boxes were not necessarily suitable for all racehorses. Darvill pointed out that, while horses which had been raced a lot during the summer would be 'much sooner refreshed' in loose boxes, 'delicate horses,' which were unlikely to be in such hard work, ate their feed better when kept in stalls. He also recommended stalls for mares that were 'restless and flighty when alone.'⁵¹ A horse's racing schedule, constitution and behaviour were, therefore, all influencing in which form of stabling the trainer chose to keep a horse.



Fig. 2. An early example of loose boxes at John Scott's stable near Cheltenham, 1822. Horses can move about more freely than in stalls. With its exceptionally large cage sections, this particular design recalls animal housing in menageries.

During the 19th century, ideas were also changing about certain health conditions that horses were susceptible towards and how diseases came about, and we can

⁵⁰ Worsley, *The Design and Development of the Stable and Riding House*, 153 - 154

⁵¹ Darvill, *Treatment and Training of the English Race Horse*, 73 – 75.

see this mirrored in changes in stable design. While during the 18th century, horses (even valuable horses like racehorses) had typically been housed in large stable buildings housing eight or more horses, in the early 19th century such buildings gradually ceased to be thought of as ideal.⁵² Veterinary surgeons and sporting writers recommended that horses lived in stable buildings subdivided into ranges containing no more than a small number of horses. It was thought that horses were most likely to become ill by inhaling ‘miasmas, influenzae, animal and malignant effluviae.’⁵³ These ideas mirrored wider public health concerns of the period. As Hamlin explains, inhaling poor air was thought to enfeeble the constitution (a contributing cause of disease), while miasmas were ‘unisolatable... materials in the air emanating from vegetable decomposition’ which were ‘a specific cause of a specific disease, analogous to contagion.’⁵⁴ Yet, it is worth noting that William Percivall’s four-volume veterinary manual, *Hippopathology* (first published in the late 1830s and 40s) pointed out that great uncertainty surrounded ‘atmospheric influences’ on horse health.⁵⁵ Thus, we should not be too swift to infer that the move towards keeping horses in stable buildings that had been sub-divided ranges was solely attributable to changing ideas of equine health and disease. Darvill recommended that not more than four horses be kept in one stable, for the reason that, ‘is seldom occurs that... there are more than four horses which require to be worked and treated so exactly alike...’⁵⁶ Therefore, how horses were trained and managed likely also played a factor in subdividing larger stable buildings that were used to house racehorses.

⁵² Good surviving examples of large 18th century stables can be seen at Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire, and at Seaton Delaval in Northumberland.

⁵³ Percivall, *Hippopathology*, Vol. 2, 26 - 27

⁵⁴ Christopher Hamlin, “Predisposing Causes and Public Health in Early Nineteenth Century Medical Thought,” *Social History of Medicine*, 5 (1992): 55.

⁵⁵ Percivall, *Hippopathology*, Vol. 1, 151, 161. William Percivall, *Hippopathology, a Systematic Treatise of the Disorders and Lamenesses of the Horse*, Vol. 3, (Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longman, London, 1843), 203- 206.

⁵⁶ Darvill, *Treatment and Training of the English Race Horse*, Vol. 1, 42.

It is quite evident, however, that whatever uncertainty may have surrounded the ‘atmospheric influences’ on equine disease, promoting health and minimising disease were the primary reasons for not keeping too many horses in one space. As early as 1844, one sporting writer cautioned against keeping horses in ranges of more than two. His reasoning was that many horses breathing in the same space contaminated the air, and made it more likely that ‘infectious complaints’ were transmitted. In a large stable, some diseases could spread swiftly; the ability to completely close off just a small number of horses reduced the risk of disease spreading.⁵⁷ Instead, he advocated for keeping horses completely isolated from one another physically. He also recommended using an entirely separate ventilation system for each animal, and stated that, ‘the custom... of having holes to pass the air from one box or stable to another should be most positively condemned.’⁵⁸

Racing stables, however, were widely criticised in the early 19th century for being poorly ventilated and too hot.⁵⁹ It would be easy to blame this, like many veterinary authors of the period did, on trainers’ ignorance. But many sporting writers were of the opinion that warmth was necessary to bring racehorses into peak condition, in part because the Thoroughbred had originated (officially, at least) from a warm climate.⁶⁰ Thus, racehorse trainers faced yet another difficult balancing act alongside the problem of feeding, which required them to keep racehorses in conditions that simultaneously caused ill health.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Cotherstone, “On Training the Race-Horse,” *New Sporting Magazine*, 8, no. 48 (December 1844): 399.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 399-400.

⁵⁹ Brown, *The Turf Expositor*, 38.

⁶⁰ Cool climates were linked with ‘coarseness’, such as in a small Shetland pony, while the warmth of desert climes created sleek, elegant horses. See: T. H. Morland, *The Genealogy of the English Race Horse* (London: J. Barfield, 1810), 51. Blaine, *Outlines of the Veterinary Art*, 62. Lieut.-General Sir F. Fitzwygram, Bart., *Horses and Stables* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1869), 19.

⁶¹ Percivall, *Hippopathology*, Vol. 1, 65. See also: William Youatt, *The Horse*, (London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1831), 345 – 347.

As Worsley observed, 19th century writers on horse management devoted much attention to building ventilation.⁶² In the first half of the 19th century, veterinary writers recommended keeping the windows open where possible, opening and closing windows according to outdoor conditions to regulate indoor temperature, and inserting a pipe into the roofs of stables to allow a steady supply of fresh air.⁶³ This too, reflected wider public health concerns of the period; poor ventilation, specifically inhaling ‘vitiating’ air, was thought to enfeeble the constitution, which could bring about disease.⁶⁴ Sanitary reformers such as Edwin Chadwick focused their attention towards combatting dirt and urban overcrowding, and we can see this mirrored in the concern about overcrowded stables as well.⁶⁵ Therefore, stables containing many horses were considered to cause sickness, especially when they were poorly ventilated, and horses, in turn, were thought most liable to become ill from what was in the air. The influence of these ideas is visible in surviving plans of racing stables from the mid and late 19th century. Two plans of racing stables in Newmarket in 1862 show two, three, four and five stall stable ranges. Each of these ranges was separated by external and in some cases internal doors as well.⁶⁶

By 1862, stables housing many horses within the same space were declared to be objectionable because, ‘in the event of an epidemic, the health of the whole stable is endangered, and separation then becomes difficult.’⁶⁷ Writers of the period recognised that it was easier to maintain good ventilation in spaces with fewer horses, which reduced the risk of disease. Separating horses into small

⁶² Worsley, *The Design and Development of the Stable and Riding House*, 138 – 142.

⁶³ Lawson, *The Modern Farrier*, 142. Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment and Training of the English Race Horse*, Vol 2, 77 – 80.

⁶⁴ Hamlin, “Predisposing Causes and Public Health,” 54 – 56.

⁶⁵ S. E. Finer, *The Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick* (London & New York: Routledge, 2016).

⁶⁶ Thomas Edward Knightley, *Stable Architecture* (London: Baily Brothers, 1862), plate 9, 11.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1

groups and housing them in buildings sub-divided into ranges with doors between each range ensured that fewer animals were breathing the same air, and gave trainers greater control over the temperature and ventilation of the stables.⁶⁸ Improved ventilation systems within these ranges ensured horses breathed in ‘pure air’ and were less exposed to ‘noxious effluvia’ from dung, urine, and exhaled air that caused ill health.

During the 19th century, racing stables also gradually adopted better ventilation, mostly by installing windows and air pipes in the ceiling. Towards the end of the century, turret exhaust ventilators were a standard feature in newly constructed stables.⁶⁹ Although recommended air temperatures for stables changed little during the 19th century (see table 1), it is evident that many racing stables, which had a tendency to be poorly ventilated to ensure a warm temperature, slowly moved towards better ventilation. Instead of closing windows and doors to maintain heat, horses were kept artificially warm by putting blankets on them.⁷⁰ Heating systems were also installed in a few establishments, such as at Beckhampton and Druid’s Lodge.⁷¹

⁶⁸ William Miles, *General Remarks on Stables and Examples of Stable Fittings* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green, 1864), 7- 11.

⁶⁹ George Tattersall, *Sporting Architecture* (London: R. Ackerman, 1841), 11, 44. T. E. Coleman, *Stable Sanitation and Construction*, London, E & F.N. Spoon Ltd., 1897), 51.

⁷⁰ Day, *The Racehorse in Training*, 30 – 31. Hayes, *Stable Management and Exercise*, 288.

⁷¹ Coleman, *Stable Sanitation and Construction*, 59.

Table 1: Recommended temperature for stables.⁷²

Year	Summer Temperature	Winter Temperature
1816 [Delabere Blaine]	> 65 degrees F.	50-55 degrees
1830 [J. Baxter]	60 – 65	> 50
1865 [RSPCA publication]	> 60	<50
1880 [William Day]	‘as cool as can be’	45 degrees
1885 [William J Miles]	65 – 68	< 50 degrees
1891 [Bing Giraud]	45 – 65	45-65
1897 [Coleman]	> 70 degrees	45 – 50 degrees

As chapter two has shown, trainers, stable lads, and sporting writers also paid close attention to racehorse behaviour, which they interpreted in mostly anthropomorphic terms, and humans sometimes adjusted their own behaviour in response to the horse. Although there had been calls as early as the 1840s to keep horses completely isolated from one another, many writers on stabling also recognised that horses were sociable animals, and that keeping them isolated might have negative side effects. Horses were observed to feed better when they could see one another, and having other horses for company would stop them from becoming bored while in their stables.⁷³ As one writer explained,

⁷² Blaine, *The Outlines of the Veterinary Art*, 62. J. Baxter, *The Library of Agricultural and Horticultural Knowledge* (Sussex Agricultural Press, London, 1830), 302. Day, *The Racehorse in Training*, 18 Miles, *Modern Practical Farriery*, 1875, 125. Byng Giraud, *Stable Building and Stable Fitting* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1891), 61. Coleman, *Stable Sanitation and Construction*, 58.

⁷³ Cecil, *The Stud Farm*, 15. Cecil, *Stable Practice*, 3. John Stewart, *Stable Economy* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1855), 57. Stonehenge, *Manual of British Rural Sports*, 326. Stonehenge, *The Horse in the Stable and the Field: His Varieties, Management in Health and Disease, Anatomy, Physiology, etc. etc.* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1866), 190.

‘The horse is a gregarious and social animal, and is not satisfied with the bare knowledge, that he has a neighbour near at hand, but he likes to see him, and enjoy his company, provided he does not chance to be of too lively a turn, and indulge in the amusement of teasing him when he wishes to be quiet...’⁷⁴

In 1864, the veterinary surgeon Edward Mayhew published a fierce critique of common stable designs of the period that prohibited equine interaction. He pointed out that horses were naturally part of a herd, in which they found ‘pleasure and safety.’ Stables, on the other hand, were ‘built to enforce the extreme of solitary confinement,’ which went completely against horses’ social needs.⁷⁵ Mayhew proposed a radical rethinking of stable design, which allowed all horses in a stable to see one another, and stable doors split into two halves, which permitted horses to look outside (see fig. 3).⁷⁶

To further accommodate horses’ need for movement, Mayhew suggested that the stable door could be fully opened at night, so that the horse could walk about in an adjoining paddock. Specifically addressing racehorse housing, Mayhew wrote,

‘Such suggestions may startle the prejudices inherent in the proprietors of most training stables... Half an acre of... land could, without much expense be attached to each box... so much liberty could be afforded the equine captive during the night. The racer being reared for speed, it is surely wrong to cramp its limbs by too stringent confinement!’⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Miles, *General Remarks on Stables*, 32.

⁷⁵ Edward Mayhew, *Illustrated Horse Management* (London: William H. Allen, 1864), 214.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 326 – 359.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 340 -341.

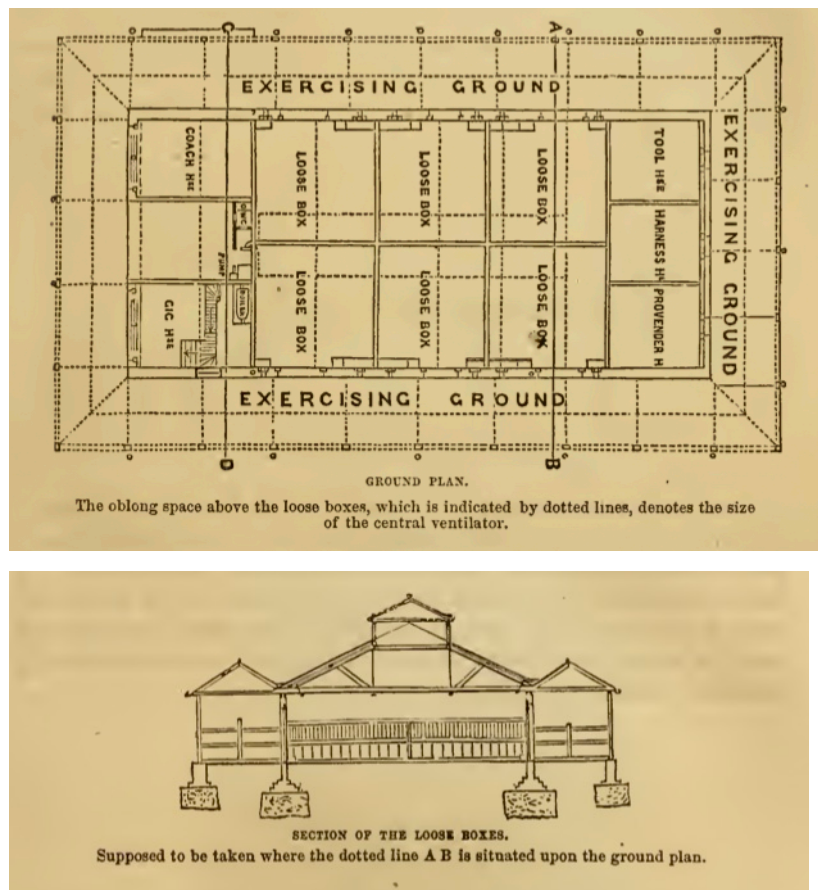


Fig. 3. Mayhew's stable design. Iron bars in the stable partitions allowed all horses to see each other. Stable doors facing outside could be opened to permit horses to look outside.

While Mayhew was perhaps the most extreme critic of stable designs which did not accommodate horses' social and movement needs, he was not alone in his opinions that stable designs should satisfy these. The architect Thomas Edward Knightley recommended that the top part of loose box divisions were left open, 'so that horses may be able to see each other.'⁷⁸ The sporting writer Harry Hieover was critical of keeping racehorses in complete isolation, which he said caused them to be unsociable, and often vicious, towards people and other

⁷⁸ Knightley, *Stable Architecture*, 4.

horses.⁷⁹ Others considered, ‘company, so that the animals may see and have access as much as possible to each other,’ an important design criteria.⁸⁰

Mayhew’s calls for paddocks to be attached to stables so that horses could roam about at night, fell on deaf ears. Specifically, where racehorses were concerned, they were never housed like this while in training. Yet, ironically (and Mayhew understood this irony only too well, and addressed it directly in his writing), young Thoroughbreds, convalescing racehorses, and racehorses at stud, were commonly kept exactly as he proposed.⁸¹ He saw no logical reason for keeping racehorses in training as they were.

In his thesis, Worsley dismissed Mayhew’s critique of existing stable designs as hyperbole, and thought that Mayhew had ulterior motives; Mayhew’s brother was a builder, and he recommended readers contact him to construct this model stable for them.⁸² I’m hesitant to agree with Worsley’s analysis. Perhaps Mayhew did hope that this design would catch on and bring his brother some business, but, when you read Mayhew’s criticisms of existing stable designs, and the many other veterinary and sporting writers who mentioned horses’ social needs, Mayhew’s new plans make complete sense. He was trying to completely rethink stable design, and create a species-appropriate way of keeping horses that were in work.⁸³

⁷⁹ Harry Hieover, “A Short Tale on Long Tales,” *New Sporting Magazine* (November 1849): 358 – 359.

⁸⁰ ‘Amateur,’ *Horses: Their Rational Treatment and the Causes of Their Deterioration and Premature Decay in Two Parts* (London: W. Ridgeway, 1870), 46 – 47.

⁸¹ Mayhew, *Illustrated Horse Management*, 388.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 359. Worsley, *The Design and Development of the Stable and Riding House*, 136.

⁸³ If anything, Mayhew’s design was ahead of its time; a variation of Mayhew’s design, with a central passage between two facing rows of loose boxes, can be found in many newly constructed stables today. Individual paddocks adjoining loose boxes as Mayhew suggested, while not often found in the UK, are a common feature in central Europe and the United States.

The opinions of Mayhew and others that horses' social needs were important factors to consider when designing stables were not universally held, however. An opposing line of thought favoured stall and stable partitions which stopped horses from seeing one another, and, at its most extreme, keeping horses completely isolated from each other. George Tattersall recommended stall partitions in racing stables that were 'high enough to prevent the horses from seeing each other at any time.'⁸⁴ The trainer William Day, writing 40 years later, perceived equine interaction in stables to be a risk, and therefore recommended stall partitions that stopped horses from seeing one another, which he said would prevent them from 'becoming restless and kicking over the lower end, and injuring themselves.'⁸⁵ A recurring column on veterinary medicine and stable management in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* stressed that horses in hard work should be kept 'isolated,' and that each loose box should have 'only its own air and its own noise.' Loose boxes where horses could see what was happening in the stable yard were said to be 'of no use whatever.'⁸⁶ While today we would assume that a loose box permits a horse too look out, photographs from the late 19th and early 20th century universally show isolation-style loose boxes with fully closed doors, even those which had a window in the door that could be opened.⁸⁷ Therefore, equine social interaction in stables was not universally regarded as positive, or even necessary. This opposing line of thought relied on stable designs to prevent horses from interacting with one another so that they were kept quiet and did not injure themselves.

As a result, when racing stables were rebuilt and modified, many were designed specifically to keep horses entirely separated from each other. By the late 19th

⁸⁴ Tattersall, *Sporting Architecture*, 43 – 44.

⁸⁵ Day, *The Racehorse in Training*, 57.

⁸⁶ "Veterinarian," *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 8 November 1879, 22.

⁸⁷ See for example, "Racing Stables—Mr. Huggins, Heath House, Newmarket," *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, February 11, 1899, 204. "Racing Stables—Mr. James Ryan, Green Lodge, Newmarket," *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, March 4, 1899, 18.

century, racing stables were increasingly being built in the same manner as infirmary boxes, with completely solid walls between each horse. The only deviation in their design from designated infirmary boxes was a small door between each stable, which allowed a person to pass from loose box to loose box without being exposed to the elements (see fig. 4, 5 & 6).⁸⁸ This modified infirmary box design prevented racehorses from having any contact with each other, and therefore ran in complete contradiction with the social needs of horses, which were widely recognised.

Loose boxes had originally been recommended for ill and convalescing horses because they allowed the animal to rest better than in a stall. Now, such stabling was being used to maintain healthy racehorses, and rest formed an important part of that reasoning. Descriptions abound of the importance of rest for racehorses, of keeping them quiet and undisturbed, and of the importance of them lying down. It was common practice to close the stable doors when the horses were not being prepared for exercise, cleaned, or fed, so that they would eat and rest. Considering that the loose box originated as a way for horses to recover from injury, the concept that loose boxes should be places of quiet and rest for all horses is not surprising.

⁸⁸ Surviving examples of loose boxes built on the principle of infirmary boxes can be found at Heath House Stables, Machell House Stables and Palace House Stables in Newmarket.

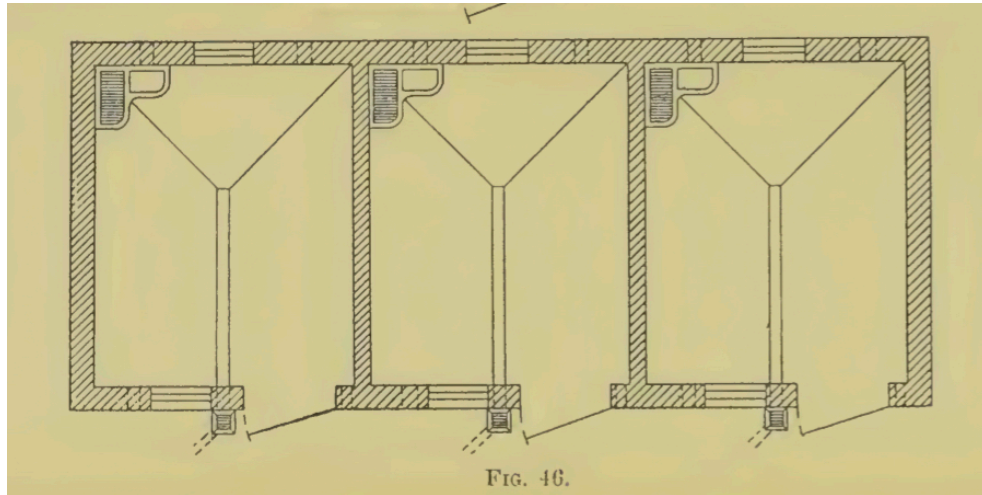


Fig. 4. Design for infirmary boxes, in T. E. Coleman's *Stable Sanitation and Construction*, 1897.



Fig. 5. Infirmary boxes (also known as Horse Hospital) at Druid's Lodge, Wiltshire. They are located many hundreds of metres away from the main stable yard.

Where the issue of racehorses' social needs are concerned, the veterinary surgeon William Miles provides an enlightening description. Miles believed that horses were highly social animals, who would find isolation 'a severe and irksome punishment.'⁸⁹ Yet, he was certain that racehorses were different from other horses in this regard. He thought that the way in which racehorses were reared and kept caused their social behaviours to decline. Miles wrote, '[The racehorse] is brought up on the 'separate' if not the 'silent' system of prison discipline; the desire for companionship is dead within him — he is a quadrupedal anchorite, and does not care for his kind.'⁹⁰ Racehorse housing and management, therefore, had the ability to modify racehorse behaviour, meaning that racehorses were able to be housed in loose boxes built after the infirmary box design.

Viewed in isolation, the difference between cage boxes and infirmary-style boxes are merely a design choice, but when we consider the differing opinions regarding horses' social needs, and the fact that stabling horses was associated with an increase in disease, the shift towards the isolation box design makes logical sense. Horses kept in the ideal 'state of nature' were regarded as largely free from disease; stabled horses were more likely to become diseased. Looseboxes, which were originally used for horses that were ill or recovering from illness, started to be used more widely as a preventive measure to ensure racehorse health was maintained. Stalls and cage boxes were divided into ranges of between two to five horses, so that horses were less likely to be disturbed, and that, in the case of illness, each range of stables could be isolated off from the others. Furthermore, few racehorses were trained and fed alike, and each range compartmentalised horses with similar requirements. The infirmary box principle perfected many of these concepts. Physically, visually and audibly separated from one another, racehorses in these stables had completely separate ventilation. A horse being brought in or out of the stables, or another horse being restless in its stable, was unlikely to disturb other horses. Except when at exercise, each

⁸⁹ Miles, *Modern Practical Farriery*, 130.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 130 – 131.

racehorse was kept isolated and as quiet as possible. In stable design, rest, health and the risk of disease were being prioritised over racehorses' psychological wellbeing.⁹¹

Although, by the late 19th century, stalls were no longer being used to house all healthy racehorses as they had previously, they were not entirely phased out either. The trainer William Day, for example, pointed out that some horses would never do well in loose boxes, because they would walk incessantly if they were put into one; in a stall, they would stand quietly and 'consequently do better.'⁹² He described his own stables, which had 'nineteen boxes and thirty-one stalls,' indicating that the majority of horses he had in training were still kept in stalls in the 1880s.⁹³

⁹¹ Likely due to horses' sociable natures, not all animals were quiet in their loose boxes. As a result, some racehorse trainers began actively fostering inter-species bonding between horses and other domestic animals. Two of Matthew Dawson's horses had 'pet cats' who enjoyed each other's company, the cats benefitting from the horses' warmth by sleeping on their rug-covered backs. Sam Darling initially tried calming a horse which was nervous in its stable by putting a goat into its box. The experiment failed, but the horse became quiet when he tried introducing a cat instead. See: John Kent, "Red Deer and the Chester Cup," *Baily's Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, June 1, 1890, 388 – 393. "Circular Notes," *Illustrated Sporting & Dramatic News*, Nov. 19. 1892, 339. Sam Darling, *Sam Darling's Reminiscences* (London: Mills & Boon, 1914), 23.

⁹² Day, *The Racehorse in Training*, 6.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 4.



Fig. 6. Photograph of 1904 a loose box built for Leopold de Rothschild to house his racehorses. Solid walls, separate ventilation for each stable, and stable doors which prohibit the horse from looking out perfected the infirmary-style loose box designed to maximise rest and minimise disease.

Table 2: Number of stalls and loose boxes in plans for training stables in and around Newmarket.⁹⁴

Year of Architect's Plan	Newmarket Training Stable	Number of Stalls	Number of Loose Boxes
1883	New Stables for Mr. Sherwood	0	24
1884	New Stables for C. Wood	12	32
1891	New stables at Meynell House, occupied by Mr. Waugh	0	7
1895	Stabling for Matthew Dawson	10	33
1896	New stables for Thomas Leader	0	13
1897	Additional Stabling for Arthur Beard	5	6
1900	New Stables for F. W. Day	0	26
1900	Training Establishment for A. Stedall	4	21
1900	Training Establishment	11	29

⁹⁴ Plans of racing stables, EF 506/6/1/1/A5, EF 506/6/1/A10, EF 506/6/1/H96, EF 506/6/1/J101, EF 506/6/1/G41, EF 506/6/1/1/19, EF 506/6/1/1/40, EF 506/6/1/1/48a, EF 506/6/1/4/173, EF 506/6/1/5/242, EF 506/6/1/6/3, EF 506/6/1/5/262, EF 506/6/1/6/22, EF 506/6/1/6/49, EF 506/6/1/7/53, EF 506/6/1/8/125, EF 506/6/1/8/134, EF 506/6/1/9/155, EF 506/6/1/11/285, EF 506/6/1/11/281, EF 506/6/1/12/348, EF 506/6/1/13/360, EF 506/6/1/13/399, all held at Suffolk Record Office, Bury St. Edmunds.

	for the Earl of Derby		
1900	Stabling for Colonel Chaine	0	12
1901	Stables for Sir Waldie Griffiths Bart.	8	12
1902	Additional Stabling at Lagrange House for George Blackwell	0	24
1903	New Stables for Leopold de Rothschild	0	13
1905	Stables for S. B. Joel	0	7
1906	New Stables at Somerville Lodge	0	6
1908	New Wooden Boxes for Captain Dewhurst	0	11
1909	New Stables for Captain Dewhurst	0	8
1911	New Stables for J. Butters, Kremlin House	0	17
1911	New Loose Boxes for Stanley House Stables, Earl of Derby	0	20

Day's opinion in the 1880s that stalls were appropriate for some racehorses appears not to have been a widespread belief, however. Of all the surviving architects plans of new stables being built in Newmarket, or of alterations to

existing stables, looseboxes make up the majority of horse housing (see table 2). On some of the plans, stalls are clearly marked for ‘hacks,’ meaning that they were not used for racehorses.⁹⁵ Stalls did continue to be a common way of keeping urban working horses into the 20th century, however.⁹⁶

Racehorses were not purely housed in infirmary-style loose boxes at the end of the 19th century, either. Of the plans consulted, by the late 19th century, training stables tended to either be built entirely upon the infirmary box plan, or incorporated a combination of infirmary boxes and ranges of between three and four cage boxes. Artists’ depictions of racehorses in stables, however, show the vast majority of the animals in loose boxes built after infirmary box design. It appears that, much as in written documents that discuss equine health and behaviour, opinions were divided about whether horses should or should not have contact with one another. However, only one plan shows an establishment consisting entirely of cage boxes.⁹⁷ In contrast, many more consist of a majority or entirely loose boxes after the infirmary box design.

The presence of some cage boxes in training stables suggest that not all horses could be housed in infirmary-style loose boxes, even if it was desirable for health reasons. It also shows that trainers assessed horses as to their suitability for a specific type of stabling, and housed horses accordingly. Although the infirmary box may have, for the trainer at least, been the ideal design which reduced the risk of disease and infection, equine behaviour made such housing impossible for some horses. The best illustration of this that I have found is in the loose boxes at Palace House Stables, which were completed in 1904; in one of the walls between two boxes is an internal window with iron bars that allows the horses in

⁹⁵ Egerton House Stables in Newmarket is a rare example of a racing stable which still has the original stalls used for keeping hacks. They have been repurposed as wash racks to hose down the horses.

⁹⁶ W. J. Gordon, *The Horse World of London* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1893).

⁹⁷ Training Establishment for A. Stedall, 1900, EF 506/6/1/6/22, Bury St. Edmunds Record Office.

those two boxes to have visual and audible contact with one another. All the other loose boxes are completely isolated. Both humans and racehorses shaped stable design.

Conclusions

Examining how racehorses were housed and fed during the 19th century reveals trainers and expert commentators trying to navigate a tightrope between health, wellbeing and performance as they strived to create an artificially fast horse whose natural needs still needed to be accommodated. The artificial way in which racehorses were fed meant that they were regarded as being more liable to disease than a horse in ‘a state of nature.’ Grass, while cooling and medicinal, didn’t bring horses into high condition, so it wasn’t an ideal feed for racehorses—although it was good for young racehorses, Thoroughbred broodmares, and convalescing racehorses. Oats, on the other hand, were a heating feed, which were thought to make racehorses more liable to inflammatory diseases, but they were also necessary to bring horses into racing condition, and to make youngstock grow quickly so they could appear physically mature, which yearling auctions and trends towards racing younger horses demanded. Therefore, feeding racehorses necessitated constant observation and assessment, because ‘heating’ or ‘cooling’ feedstuffs had different effects on the horse’s body.

Human intervention caused disease by deviating from the ideal natural state with artificial food and housing. Yet keeping racehorses permanently at grass seemed out of the question, and thus, just as with feeding, racehorse trainers needed to try to manage the effects of ill health associated with stabling. The recommended annual ‘run at grass’ fell out of favour in the early 19th century. At the same time, loose boxes, which originated as a place to keep horses when they were ill or recovering from illness, were increasingly being adopted in racing stables as permanent housing. The move from racehorses in training being housed in stalls, to smaller ranges of stalls or cage loose boxes of between 3-5 horses, to infirmary-style boxes which housed horses in complete isolation from one

another, showed how health and contagion became increasingly more prominent factors influencing racehorse stable design.

Simultaneously, differing opinions about horses' social needs in relation to stabling meant that there were two different strains of thought, both of which influenced loose box design. Cage boxes and infirmary-style boxes each had their benefits and disadvantages, depending on which side of the fence a trainer or racehorse owner was on, where equine behaviour was concerned.

While cage boxes allowed horses to look outside of their boxes and interact with one another, loose boxes built on the principle of isolation boxes took the ideas of racehorses needing lots of rest, as well as preventing the spread of disease, to their utmost extreme. Where previously 'nature,' and 'a run at grass' had been the great restoratives, now each loose box became its own isolation hospital.

Racehorse health and racehorse behaviour influenced how stables were built. Rather than a simple shift from tie-stalls to loose boxes originating in racing stables and then being adopted outside of racing circles, as Worsley concluded, a tangled mix of ideas about racehorse feeding, health, housing and behaviour shaped the designs of racing stables in the 19th century and beyond. Trainers navigated a series of paradoxes as they tried to bring their horses into racing condition without them becoming ill. Horses in a state of nature were regarded as being healthy and free from disease, while stables were associated with ill health. Yet, bringing a racehorse into racing condition while keeping it in a state of nature was not considered a viable alternative. 19th century changes to racehorse stable design stemmed from a desire to try to overcome the health-related problems caused by artificial housing and feeding, while still maintaining those artificial conditions.

4. Racehorse Health Care

‘There are, however, some peculiarities about Newmarket, whatever might be our first impression, that are really unfavourable to the success of the veterinary practitioner. In the first place, it is the metropolis of the groom’s empire; it is where he has for many a year ruled with absolute sway, and where he would be most of all jealous of a rival, and a rival whose superiority he feels and dreads.’

– *The Veterinarian*, 1831¹

The famous racehorse and breeding sire Eclipse died in 1789, at the age of 25. Upon his death, Eclipse’s owner O’Kelly asked the French veterinary surgeon Charles Vial de St. Bel (Sainbel) to perform an anatomical dissection of the animal. Not only did Sainbel produce extensive records of Eclipse’s anatomy which would prove a valuable resource for veterinary surgeons in the future, he also mounted the horse’s skeleton for display (more on this, in a later chapter). A year later, Sainbel would play a pivotal role in the founding of the London Veterinary College, the first of its kind in Britain.²

Despite Sainbel’s dissection of Eclipse, and countless reports of injuries to racehorses both on and off the racecourse spanning more than two centuries, the history of the sport of horse racing has not concerned itself, thus far, with the role that equine health and disease may have played in the sport. While Landry shows the important role that Thoroughbred horses played in shaping English horsemanship and the national culture more broadly, she makes no mention of

¹ “The Veterinarian, August 1,” *The Veterinarian*, 4 (1831): 455- 462.

² For a comprehensive history of Eclipse, see: Nicholas Clee, *Eclipse* (London: Bantam Press, 2009).

equine health and disease.³ Huggins, Vamplew and Pinfold, three of the most prolific academic racing historians, have not considered the impact that equine healthcare may have had on horse racing in any of their work. Perhaps the most surprising aspect of this omission is the fact that much of the literature they consulted for their research made mention of injuries that horses sustained and what trainers did, both to monitor the health of their horses and to care for them in cases of injury or disease. It is also startling from a contemporary context, when one considers that, in the past 15 years, the Horserace Betting Levy Board has devoted over £30 million to equine veterinary research funding; in 2016 alone, the Racing Foundation, British European Breeders Fund and Thoroughbred Breeders' Association allocated £2.02 million.⁴ Such significant investments in equine veterinary research by the racing industry today might suggest that injuries and diseases sustained by racehorses were of critical importance in the past as well. Yet, there are no substantial histories of racehorse health and disease to draw upon.

A key problem with omitting equine health and disease from the history of horse racing is that it creates an illusion of the sport's past in which horses were permanently healthy, and people charged with the care and training of horses did not worry about such issues. This is not to imply, however, that there are no histories of equine medical care. Louise Hill Curth, in particular, has been prolific contributor to the subject. She has shown that 17th century animal healthcare was a vibrant medical marketplace populated by a variety of animal healthcare providers.⁵ She builds on this medical marketplace model in two somewhat repetitive manuscripts on equine healthcare prior to the establishment of the Royal Veterinary College, which provide a foundation for future work on

³ Donna Landry, *Noble Brutes: How Eastern Horses Transformed English Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

⁴ *HBLB Veterinary Bulletin*, Horserace Betting Levy Board, Autumn 2016, p. 1-2.

Accessed online (June 26, 2017):

http://www.hblb.org.uk/documents/racehorse_health/Bulletin%202016.pdf

⁵ Louise Hill Curth, "The Care of the Brute Beast: Animals and the Seventeenth-century Marketplace," *Social History of Medicine*, 15, no. 3 (2002): 375 – 392.

this subject.⁶ Although Curth demonstrates the importance of taking equine healthcare prior to the establishment of the Veterinary College in London in 1791 seriously, it is MacKay's work which really unpicks the connection between elite equines and the development of equine healthcare in the early modern period. His research shows that farriery branched off into a specialised, gentlemanly profession during the 18th century, which provided skilled equine medical care long before the establishment of a formal veterinary institution in England. Of critical importance to the history of horse racing, he concludes that this gentlemanly farriery developed to service the pleasure horses of the aristocracy.⁷ Further research by Mitsuda confirms MacKay's findings: classical riding masters of the 18th century such as Bourgelat and La Gueriniere taught horsemanship *and* equine anatomy at their equestrian schools. Veterinary schools established in France, Germany and Austria in the late 18th century sought improve equine medical care, and not animal medicine more broadly.⁸ Despite the important role that elite equines played in shaping animal medical care, secondary literature specifically on the subject of the history of racehorse healthcare does not exist, bar one publication, which only devotes a few pages to veterinary surgeons in Newmarket prior to the 20th century.⁹

While historians have extensively researched diseases that affected many domesticated animals, such as Rabies, Bovine Tuberculosis, Foot and Mouth Disease, and Cattle Plague, equine diseases have received comparatively little

⁶ Louise Hill Curth, *The Care of Brute Beasts: A Social and Cultural History of Veterinary Medicine in Early Modern England* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010). Louise Hill Curth, *'A plaine and easie waie to remedie a horse': Equine Medicine in Early Modern England*, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013).

⁷ Michael Hubbard MacKay, *The Rise of a Medical Speciality: The Medicalisation of Elite Equine Care c. 1680 – c. 1800* (PhD thesis: University of York), 2009.

⁸ Tatsuya Mitsuda, "The Equestrian Influence and the Foundation of Veterinary Schools in Europe, c. 1760- 1790," *eSharp*, 10 (winter, 2007).

⁹ P. Rosedale et al., *The History of Equine Veterinary Practice in Newmarket from 1831 to 2011* (Newmarket: Romney Publications, 2011).

attention.¹⁰ The only exceptions are Anthrax and Glanders (easily the most feared equine disease of the past, and even this remains woefully under-researched, especially when one considers that Glanders could be transmitted from horses to humans).¹¹ Wilkinson's brief European history of Glanders uses the disease to demonstrate the evolution of veterinary science and comparative pathology from the 18th to the early 20th century.¹² Blancou has argued that wide variations in the symptoms of Glanders, which caused difficulties in effectively diagnosing it, as well as the politics of the disease, all delayed the implementation of effective disease management.¹³ MacKay, who devoted the last chapter of his thesis to the subject, greatly expands on work by Wilkinson and Blancou, showing how, by the 1740s, Glanders changed from a purely symptomatic disease to an anatomical one. As MacKay states, 'the disease concepts of Glanders help redefine the historiography of eighteenth-century equine disease.'¹⁴ Furthermore, Sharrer's history of Glanders in 19th century America demonstrates how government policy caused the disease to spread throughout the country upon the dispersal of Army horses after the Civil War,

¹⁰ Abigail Woods, *A Manufactured Plague? The History of Foot and Mouth Disease* (London: Earthscan, 2004). Abigail Woods, "The Construction of an Animal Plague: Foot and Mouth Disease in Nineteenth-century Britain," *Social History of Medicine*, 17, no. 1 (2004): 23 – 39. Neil Pemberton and Michael Worboys, *Mad Dogs and Englishmen: Rabies in Britain, 1830 – 2000* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). C. A. Spinage, *Cattle Plague: A History* (New York, Boston, Dordrecht, London and Moscow: Kluwer Academic, 2003).

¹¹ Richard M. Swiderski, *Anthrax: A History* (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland & Company, 2004). Anne Hardy, "Pioneers in the Victorian Provinces: Veterinarians, Public Health and the Urban Animal Economy," *Urban History*, 29, no. 3 (2002): 372 – 387.

¹² Lise Wilkinson, "Glanders: medicine and veterinary medicine in common pursuit of a contagious disease," *Medical History*, 25, no. 4 (1981): p. 363 - 384

¹³ J. Blancou, "Early Methods for the Surveillance and Control of Glanders in Europe," *Revue Scientifique et Technique*, 13, no. 2 (1994): 545-557.

¹⁴ MacKay, *The Rise of a Medical Speciality*, 331.

bringing a much-needed geographical perspective to the history of Glanders.¹⁵ As McShane and Tarr have illustrated, the urbanisation of horses in the 19th century brought with it new concerns around human and equine health. Horses living in crowded conditions were more likely to spread disease, and the outbreak of an epizootic could bring urban transportation to a halt, and cause great financial losses.¹⁶ Thus, the history of human-equine co-existence is also a history of equine health and disease.

This existing literature raises a number of questions relating to racehorse healthcare in the 19th century. Firstly, moving forward in time from the work of McKay, can we observe an extension of the co-development of horse racing and veterinary medicine during the 19th century? Secondly, building on Curth's work, did an equine healthcare marketplace continue to exist in the 19th century after the establishment of the Veterinary College, and, if so, what form did it take? Thirdly, what diseases affected racehorses, and, beyond the issues already examined in previous chapters relating to feeding, housing, and training, what attempts were made to preserve racehorse health and limit the impact of disease? Lastly, how did equine healthcare change during the 19th century?

As discussed in the previous chapter, concerns about equine health and disease impacted how racehorses were fed and housed during the 19th century. Human intervention in racehorse's lives (a deviation from the ideals of 'nature') by artificial feeding, housing, and bringing the racehorse into peak condition, were all linked to an increased risk of ill health. This chapter will build on these ideas, creating a picture of racehorse health care in the 19th and early 20th century. It is very difficult, however, to unpick the healthcare and medical care of racehorses during this time period from that of horses in general, and perhaps this is one of the reasons why historians have neglected to research this particular area of both the history of the sport, and the history of science. No dedicated records from

¹⁵ G. Terry Sharrer, "The Great Glanders Epizootic, 1861-1866: A Civil War Legacy" *Agricultural History*, 69, no. 1 (1995): 79-97.

¹⁶ Clay McShane and Joel Tarr, *The Horse in the City – Living Machines in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 149-164.

veterinary practices in the main racehorse training centres in Britain survive. Instead, it is primarily individual events recorded by trainers, sporting magazines, training manuals and veterinary journals which provide us with some insight into what they did. Archives of racehorse training stables, thoroughbred studs, and racehorse-owning families also contain sporadic references to racehorse healthcare and medical care, hidden in private correspondence, financial accounts, and the occasional veterinary report. While these sources make it difficult to reach general conclusions on the subject, they nevertheless provide an enticing window into the world of racehorse health and disease that has hitherto been overlooked.

To avoid confusion, this chapter will differentiate between equine health care and veterinary medicine, which is a sub-set of equine health care. This is necessary because, as this chapter will illustrate, many of those persons responsible for the health care of racehorses were not veterinary surgeons. Thus, the term *veterinary medicine* will only be used when it is a veterinary surgeon providing equine medical care. *Equine health care* will encompass all actions taken by a person or persons to treat ill health, as well as preventive actions to preserve a horse's health.

To provide structure to such diverse source material, this chapter will first examine the 19th century equine health care marketplace, showing that racehorse trainers and head lads, veterinary surgeons, and equine dentists all tended to racehorse health care in different ways. After establishing who these health care providers were, and identifying a significant increase in veterinary surgeons in Newmarket between 1883 and 1897, I will then examine the different methods used to treat and preserve equine health in the first half of the 19th century. The final third of this chapter examines the ongoing tensions between trainers and veterinary surgeons, and also illustrates the limitations horse racing and the racehorse's body posed to medical innovation. This chapter demonstrates how human requirements and the racehorse's body shaped equine health care and disease prevention within the sport of horse racing.

Racehorse Healthcare Providers

As previous chapters have already established, racehorse trainers, and the head lads and stable lads they employed, all paid close attention to the horses in their care. Keeping an eye on each horse's condition, and identifying any signals of poor health as quickly as possible formed part of the daily, routine care which racehorse trainers provided. Although the sporting writer 'Cecil' described 'a juvenile trainer with a Pharmacopoeia of nostrums' as 'the most dangerous character that can be engaged to direct the management of horses,' it is evident that many racehorse trainers were well-versed in identifying illnesses and signs of lameness in their horses, and frequently treated health complaints themselves.¹⁷

In 1840, the veterinary surgeon Richard Darvill, recommended that all racehorse trainers keep a large selection of medicines, apothecaries' weights and fluid measures, a pestle and mortar, bandages, a drenching horn and balling iron for administering the medicines, as well as a firing iron, and an abscess lancet. These, he said, were 'necessary at all times to be kept on the premises of a large racing establishment for the immediate relief of any of the horses that may fall amiss.'¹⁸ Furthermore, he observed that such a medicine cabinet was already commonplace in the stables belonging to,

'... experienced training grooms, who themselves bleed and physic all horses entrusted to their care, as often as they conceive it necessary in assisting in the getting of such horses into condition. They also make use of their own external applications—as ointments, lotions, with bandages, fomentations, or poultices, which they apply to their horses' legs

¹⁷ Cecil, *Stable Practice, or Hints on Training for the Turf, the Chase and the Road* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1852), 84.

¹⁸ Richard Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Racehorse in a Series of Rough Notes*, Vol. 1, (London: James Ridgway, 1840), 151-153.

whenever they may have become amiss from strong work, or to their heels when cracked by sudden work or travelling.’¹⁹

Furthermore, it wasn’t necessarily just trainers who provided in-house treatment; Mrs. Day, the successful trainer John Day’s mother, mixed all the medicines for the horses, and treated ill horses and foals as well.²⁰ Considering that she was in her seventies in 1840, it’s likely that she had performed this role for a number of years if not decades.

An article in *The Veterinarian* in 1831 suggested that no one had been able to establish a viable business as a veterinary surgeon in Newmarket thus far.²¹ A year later, the *Sporting Magazine* stated that ‘At Newmarket... every trainer acts, or rather attempts to act, his own veterinarian.’²² Although the *Sporting Magazine* had commented disparagingly in 1806 about a few veterinary surgeons that ‘ventured, without probably ever having seen a horse in training in their lives, to instruct Newmarket people in the management and method of riding their race-horses,’ there is ample evidence to disprove later assertions regarding the absence of veterinary surgeons in Newmarket.²³

In 1817, the racehorse Sir Joshua died suddenly, and the veterinary surgeon John Bowles was called upon to perform a post-mortem examination. In the early 19th century, the Cambridge-based Bowles would have been a regular sight in Newmarket. In 1812, he performed an autopsy on a colt which he concluded had been maliciously poisoned with arsenic, and later gave evidence at the accused’s

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

²⁰ ‘Phoenix’, “A Chapter on Racing, &c.,” *The Sporting Magazine*, 20, no. 120 (April 1840): 465. James Rice, *History of the British Turf, from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: S. Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1879), 276-277.

²¹ “The Veterinarian, August 1,” *The Veterinarian*, 4 (1831): 458.

²² “Review of the Racing Season of 1831, and Matters Connected Therewith,” *The Sporting Magazine*, Second Series, 4, no. 22, (February 1832): 254.

²³ “On the Treatment of Horses, and Veterinary Science,” *The Sporting Magazine* (July, 1806): 178.

trial.²⁴ Few reports survive of Bowles' work in the racing town, but it was described as his 'second home,' suggesting that he spent a considerable amount of his time working in Newmarket and had gained the confidence of racehorse trainers and owners. Bowles' obituary in the *Sporting Magazine* from 1834 states that he 'attended all the horses of note on the Turf,' and that 'he found it not only necessary to look at the diseases of the race-horse, but at his engagements also.'²⁵ Bowles understood the unique nature of treating racehorses when compared with other horses, and took into consideration their racing engagements as well as their health, which goes some way to explain his professional success among the racing establishment. He was able to work with the needs of the racehorse trainers to treat ill horses in their care.

Bowles was not alone in servicing racing stables at Newmarket in the early 19th century. William Barrow Sr., a blacksmith and veterinary surgeon, was also working in the town as early as 1819, and was still working there in 1831; over the years, the name Barrow was known to many generations.²⁶ The Barrow brothers, sons of William Barrow Sr., followed in their father's footsteps and went into veterinary practice.²⁷ According to one account, William Barrow was the most successful of all Newmarket vets for years and 'practically monopolised' veterinary work in the town. Like Bowles before him, Barrow knew what was important to racehorse trainers: confidentiality and a willingness

²⁴ "The extraordinary Trial of Daniel Dawson....," *The Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal*, 8, no. 31 (July, 1812): 348 – 352.

²⁵ "The Death of Mr John Bowles," *The Cambridge Chronicle and Journal*, 14 February, 1834, 4. "Sporting Obituary," *The Sporting Magazine*, second series, 8, no. 46 (February 1834): p. 351 – 352.

²⁶ Advertisement placed by Frederick Crick, *Bury and Norwich Post*, 17 November 1819. *Pigot's Directory of Cambridgeshire*, 1830-31, (London: Pigot & Co., 1830-1831), 118-119.

²⁷ To unravel the Barrow family tree, there were three generations of Barrows: William Barrow Sr., the farrier and veterinary surgeon, his two sons William and Richard Barrow, both veterinary surgeons, and Frank, George, Charles and William Boyce Barrow Jr., the third generation of Barrow vets.

to make veterinary treatment work around each racehorse's upcoming competitions. He also had a good record of success.²⁸ During the 1860s, George Kerry, the son of a Newmarket farrier, established a further veterinary practice in the town. A few other vets set up businesses in Newmarket and left shortly afterwards, suggesting that they were unable to break into the market.²⁹

Newmarket vets also performed a variety of roles beyond servicing racehorses. William and Richard Barrow produced 'Barrow's Golden Ointment of Iodine', which was advertised in the press from the 1840s to the mid 1860s.³⁰ They also ran the *Stud Paddocks and Repository for the Sale of Thoroughbred Horses*.³¹ William Barrow Jr., who was admitted as a member of the Royal College of Veterinary surgeons in 1868, was also an elected horse-show judge for the Suffolk Agricultural Association.³² George Kerry acted as Chairman of the Newmarket Local Board of Health.³³

Further professional equine healthcare services were also available from a horse dentist, 'Professor' Henry Loeffler. Born in East Prussia in the early 1850s, Loeffler eventually settled England.³⁴ In 1879, he was advertising his services in

²⁸ James Rice, *History of the British Turf, from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, Vol. 2, (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1879), 214-215.

²⁹ *The Post Office Directory of Cambridge, Norfolk & Suffolk* (London: Kelly & Co., 1869), 78 – 80. *The Post Office Directory of Cambridgeshire* (London: Kelly & Co., 1879), 190.

³⁰ Advertisement for Barrow's Golden Ointment, *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 7 November, 1847, 1.

³¹ Advertisement for horses for sale, *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 20 March, 1853, 1. Advertisement for horses for sale, *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, April 22, 1855, 1. Advertisement for horses for sale, *The Sportsman*, 15 January, 1867, 1. Advertisement for horses for sale, *The Sportsman*, 18 March, 1871, 1.

³² "Newmarket," *Bury and Norwich Post*, 12 May, 1868, 5. "Suffolk Agricultural Association," *Bury and Norwich Post*, 23 March, 1880, 6.

³³ "Newmarket Local Board of Health," *Bury and Norwich Post*, 19 August, 1879, 8.

³⁴ United Kingdom Census of 1881. Parliamentary Borough of Lambeth. RG11/538, p. 27.

the *Sporting Gazette and Agricultural Journal* as an ‘American Veterinary Dentist’, although what – if any—training he had undertaken in America (or anywhere else, for that matter) remains unknown.³⁵ Within a year of advertising, Loeffler was the go-to horse dentist servicing countless famous racehorses around the country, and was requested to treat the teeth of the horses at the Royal Mews before the eyes of Queen Victoria.³⁶ It must have been a steep career trajectory for ‘Professor’ Loeffler, who had relocated permanently from Lambeth to Newmarket by 1884.³⁷ His work as a veterinary dentist consisted of inspecting horses’ teeth for sharp edges, filing these edges, and extracting teeth where necessary. One contemporary of Loeffler’s described his mode of working thus: ‘No twitch is used, no blood is drawn, [the horse] is not the least put out, and his confidence in man is increased tenfold.’³⁸ This description suggests that Loeffler offered an alternative service to that provided by veterinary surgeons, one which was preferable due to the way he handled the horses. Loeffler also combined his official work as a horse dentist with slightly less official work as a ‘horse tamer’, and he was regularly asked by trainers to help with their more difficult horses.³⁹ Loeffler continued to work until 1892, when he was admitted to an asylum due to mental health problems.⁴⁰

³⁵ Advertisement for ‘American Veterinary Dentist’, *The Sporting Gazette and Agricultural Journal*, March 15, 1879, 241.

³⁶ “Horse Dentistry and Horse Taming,” *Bell’s Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, February 7, 1880, 7. “Jottings,” *Luton Times and Advertiser*, March 12, 1880, 8. “Kempton Park Meeting,” *Nottingham Evening Post*, January 21, 1880, 3. “A Modern Horse Tamer,” *The Sportsman*, February 4, 1880, 3.

³⁷ “Sport and Recreations,” *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, May 17, 1884, 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁹ “A Second Daniel...,” *The Country Gentleman: Sporting Gazette and Agricultural Journal*, May 24, 1884, 646. Edward Spencer, “Horse Taming Extraordinary,” *Baily’s Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, January 1, 1897, 46-50. Edward Spencer, “Savage Horses,” *Fore’s Sporting Notes & Sketches*, 20 (1903) p. 241 - 250.

⁴⁰ Hon. F. Lawley, “On Nobbling Horses,” *Baily’s Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, June 1, 1892, 398. St. Audry’s Asylum Patient Files, Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich, ID 407 B12.

By 1896, any monopoly William Barrow may have had in Newmarket had ceased. There were five veterinary practices on the High Street; George Barrow, brother of William Jr., was located on Upper Station Road, bringing the total number of veterinary practices in the town to six.⁴¹ In Epsom, John Coleman established himself as a skilled equine vet who primarily served racehorses. He prided himself for curing horses with the worst injuries, and racehorses from around the country and abroad were sent to him for treatment.⁴² In the early 20th century, Joseph Marsh, brother of the trainer Richard Marsh, also set up as a horse dentist, and serviced racehorses in England and overseas, performing similar work as Loeffler had done.⁴³ The direct link between racehorse trainers and equine health care becomes even more apparent in the case of James Ryan

⁴¹ Because no records from veterinary practices in Newmarket or other racing vets from the period survive (with the exception of building plans for Edward Leach's practice), relatively little information can be found about their businesses. Census records show that Coleman employed a groom/veterinary assistant in 1911. In Newmarket, W. E. Livock had no assistants that lived with him at his address at March House on Newmarket High Street. Like many veterinary surgeons in the late 19th and early 20th century, Livock also operated a shoeing forge from his premises, as did Kerry & Sons and Edward Leach. On the basis of outbuildings that survive at March (now Reynolds) House, however, one can see five chimneys in the former forge, suggesting that he employed at least five shoeing smiths. See: *Kelly's Directory of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, 1896*, (London: Kelly & Co., 1896), 280. *Kelly's Directory of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, 1883* (London: Kelly & Co., 1883), 99 – 101. *Kelly's Directory of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, 1892*, (London: Kelly & Co., 189), 129 – 133, 264.

⁴² "A Visit to the Farm Veterinary Stables, Epsom," *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, June 8, 1907, 618.

⁴³ 'Jim the Penman', "Egerton House," *Sporting Times*, 11 February, 1899, 5. "Vigilant's Note-Book," *The Sportsman*, 17 September, 1901, 2. "The King's Racehorses," *The Globe*, 25 June, 1902, 5. "Town, Talk & Gossip," *Sporting Times*, 31 July, 1926, 3. Alfred E. T. Watson, *King Edward VII as a Sportsman* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1911), 154. "Royal Warrant Holders," *The Chemist and Druggist*, 54, no. 19 (November 9, 1900): 788.

Jr. The son of a racehorse trainer, Ryan Jr. was a private pupil of Professor Pritchard (then President of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons) before he took up the family profession of racehorse training.⁴⁴ Evidently Ryan Jr. or his father felt that Pritchard could provide the future trainer with a valuable education.⁴⁵

The Jockey Club formalised the relationship between veterinary surgeons and horse racing through a series of amendments to the Rules of Racing, the official rules of the sport. From 1867 onward, the Rules of Racing specified that foreign-bred horses required a veterinary surgeon to certify the age of the horse to be eligible to race in Britain, which marked the first formal relationship between Thoroughbred horse racing and the veterinary profession.⁴⁶ This change singled out veterinary surgeons as the only persons qualified to formally identify a racehorse's age— a significant responsibility due to age restrictions in many races, and the fact that weights were allocated to horses based on their age as well. In September 1907, the Rules of Racing were amended once more to require that a horse ambulance be present at every race meeting held under Jockey Club rules.⁴⁷ This was hardly ground-breaking; the Jockey Club rather lagged behind. Horse ambulances had been in use in London for removing injured animals in the 1890s, and stable accounts from Kingsclere training stables indicate that the stable had its own horse ambulance from 1906 onwards, and possibly earlier than this.⁴⁸

Throughout the 19th century, racehorse trainers, as well as the head lads and stable lads in their employ, continued to play a vital role as in-house equine

⁴⁴ "Mr. James Ryan Jr.," *Racing Illustrated*, October 30, 1895, 294.

⁴⁵ Ryan died in 1895 at the age of 21, so there is no information about whether or how his studies with Professor Pritchard aided him in his work.

⁴⁶ *The Racing Calendar for the Year 1867* (London: C., J., and E. Weatherby, 1867), XXXI.

⁴⁷ *The Racing Calendar for the Year 1907* (London: Weatherby & Sons, 1907) LXXI.

⁴⁸ Kingsclere Racing Stables Balance Sheet, 1906. P1F10/3/5/4, Nottingham University Special Collections.

health care providers. The great spike in the number of vets from 1883, when there were just two practices in the town, to six practices a mere 13 years later, may seem to suggest that veterinary surgeons were suddenly in much greater demand in Newmarket, and that a shift in thinking may have occurred which made trainers more open to or reliant upon vets to treat their horses than they had been previously. However, there remained an underlying tension between trainers and the skill and judgement of veterinary surgeons in treating ill racehorses. The trainer Sam Darling, for example, reported that he had cured two horses that were 'lame in the back' by placing the 'hot sheepskin' of a sheep he had just killed onto the horses' backs; in the case of one of the horses, Darling's vet had told him the animal was incurable.⁴⁹ The trainer and prolific author William Day also expressed his limited confidence in the skills of veterinary surgeons. He wrote:

'My experience with veterinary surgeons has not been great, because, except in illness, I think their services are of no value in comparison with a trainer's... [T]he least thing that is amiss with the horse's legs the V.S. is sent for, who must, to show his knowledge of the case, prescribe immediately with often fatal results, and the case is then discovered to be a bad one and further remedies useless, while probably if left to nature a cure might have been effected.'⁵⁰

Yet, his relationship with the profession was rather more complicated, because in his autobiography, he spoke positively of the progress which had been made by veterinary surgeons in treating equine disease, and even went so far as to suggest that a 'complete victory over disease' had been accomplished.⁵¹ Day felt optimistic about veterinary surgeons' ability to treat 'diseases', while he had little confidence in the ability of vets to treat lameness.

⁴⁹ Sam Darling, *Sam Darling's Reminiscences* (London: Mills & Boon, 1914), 24, 169.

⁵⁰ William Day, *Turf Celebrities I Have Known* (London: F.V. White & Co., 1891), 11-12.

⁵¹ William Day, *William Day's Reminiscences of the Turf* (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1886), 371 – 372, 374.

Therefore, rather than reflecting a significant change in the relationship between racehorse trainers and veterinary surgeons, the increased number of vets in Newmarket merely mirrored the increase in the number of racehorses in the town.⁵² While the estimated number of horses in training at Newmarket in 1865 stood at approximately 500, that number had swelled by the early 1890s to between 1,500 to 2,000 depending on the time of year.⁵³ As we shall now see, it was veterinary surgeons' willingness and efficacy at working within the constraints placed upon them by training schedules and racing engagements which largely determined the successful adoption or rejection of veterinary surgeons' expertise and innovations for much of the 19th century.

Maintaining Health, Treating Disease

Racehorse training hinged upon maintaining the knife-edge balance between peak condition and disease. To be successful, a trainer also needed to have a deep-seated understanding of each horse's constitution, which determined how the animal was fed, housed and exercised. Furthermore, horses were also regarded as most liable to illness between the ages of three and five years.⁵⁴ Racehorse training and racehorse health and disease were inseparable. The age shift which occurred in racing during the 19th century meant that trainers had an

⁵² Woods and Matthews also link the increasing number of veterinary surgeons in the latter half of the 19th century with the growth of the equine population of Britain as a whole. See: Abigail Woods and Stephen Matthews, "'Little, if at all, Removed from the Illiterate Farrier or Cow-leech': The English Veterinary Surgeon, c.1860–1885, and the Campaign for Veterinary Reform," *Medical History*, 54, no. 1 (2010): 29 – 54.

⁵³ "Notes on the Newmarket First October Meeting," *Sporting Life*, 27 September, 1865, 2. The Hon. Admiral Rous, *On the Laws and Practice of Horse Racing* (London: A. H. Baily & Co., 1866), 1. "In and About Newmarket," *Strand Magazine*, 2 (July 1891), 162.

⁵⁴ William Ryding, *Veterinary Pathology* (York: T. Wilson and R. Spence, 1801), 22. William Percivall, *The Diseases of the Chest and Air Passages of the Horse* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1853) p. 2-3.

ever-decreasing window during which they needed to bring their horses into racing condition and run them, and the period of peak risk of illness fell between the middle to end of most horses' racing careers.

For much of the 19th century, racehorses were regularly 'physicked' or purged, as part of their general maintenance. Racehorses were also purged at the earliest signs of ill health, such as a cough or swollen legs.⁵⁵ Physicking, as discussed in chapter 2 and 3, required the racehorse trainer to assess each horse's constitution to determine the appropriate dose; an incorrect assessment could leave the horse in a worse state, or even dead. In racing stables, physicking appears to have been carried out primarily by trainers and their head lads, and not by veterinary surgeons. This is not to say that veterinary surgeons did not rely on purgatives to prevent or cure ill health, however. In the mid 19th century, physic was so crucial that the veterinary surgeon William Percival stated, 'had [veterinary surgeons] not means of purging the animal, our art would be almost lost.'⁵⁶ A speech given before the Veterinary Medical Association in London in 1856 praised the 'therapeutical effect' of physic in cases of fever, 'plethora', 'cerebral affections', worm infestation, and to 'correct unhealthy secretions.'⁵⁷ Therefore, racehorse trainers were utilising one of the most important tools available to veterinary surgeons, and they were administering it themselves.

⁵⁵ Richard Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Racehorse in a Series of Rough Notes*, Vol. 1, (London: James Ridgway, 1840), 107 – 128. Nimrod, *The Turf* (London: John Murray, 1851), 21-22. Cecil, *The Stud Farm* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1851), 142 – 158. Cecil, *Stable Practice, or Hints on Training for the Turf, the Chase and the Road* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1852), 82-83, 175 – 178.

⁵⁶ William Percivall, *Hippopathology, a Systematic Treatise of the Disorders and Lamenesses of the Horse*, Vol. 1, (Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longman, London, 1834), 101.

⁵⁷ John Field, *An Essay on the Therapeutical Effect of Purgatives on the Horse* (London: Longman, Grown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1856)

Coughs were a common occurrence among racehorses, especially when they were first brought into training stables. But a cough could easily be the first sign something more serious, such as strangles or influenza (also referred to as ‘distemper’ or ‘catarrhal fever’).⁵⁸ Joseph Buttler, the Earl of Lonsdale’s trainer who also managed his stud, wrote in one letter to his employer of a horse that ‘had a sort of distemper or cold.’ To treat the condition, Buttler has ‘steamed his nose and blistered under the Throat and a dose of physic.’ He also mentioned that the horse had been ‘extremely good tempered to... Doctor.’⁵⁹

Just as Buttler doctored the ill horse himself, Richard Darvill’s recommendations for treating distemper, contained in his racehorse training manual, implied that the disease could be treated by a racehorse trainer, and made no mention of calling a veterinary surgeon, unless the trainer determined that the horse was showing signs that the disease was affecting the horse’s lungs. Rather, upon the first symptoms of influenza, ‘shivering; [the horse] being off his food; having a slight cough; the glands of his throat enlarged’, he advised the trainer to attempt a ‘constitutional treatment of the disease.’ This approach involved bleeding the horse, giving ‘sweet spirits of nitre in some warm gruel or beer’ and applying an embrocation or poultice at the site of swollen glands.⁶⁰ On the specifics of bleeding, Darvill advised that, ‘The quantity of blood taken should be regulated according to the age, size, constitution, and condition of the horse.’⁶¹ The same criteria which trainers were relying upon to effectively and safely bring their horses into racing condition, were therefore also applicable to restoring health.⁶²

⁵⁸ William Youatt, *The Horse*, (London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1831), 189.

⁵⁹ *See especially*: Letter from Buttler to Lonsdale, dated March 19, 1814, Lonsdale Papers, D/Lons/L9/2/7, Carlisle Record Office.

⁶⁰ Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment and Training of the English Race Horse*, Vol. 1, 82-89.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁶² The risk of a horse contracting influenza also may have played a role in the adoption of horse-drawn vans to transport racehorses in the 1830s. See: John Kent, *Racing Life of Lord George Cavendish Bentinck, MP*. (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1893), 76 – 77.

Horses were also liable to become ill with Strangles, especially when they were young, which the racehorses in training increasingly were. Strangles caused horses to cough and exhibit a nasal discharge, develop a fever, and the glands under the jaw and on the neck to become swollen. Treatment methods varied, although a combination of bleeding and physicking the horse, and blistering the site of the swollen glands was generally advised to draw out inflammation and encourage a tumour to form. When the person treating the sick horse believed the time was appropriate, the site of the swelling could be lanced and the puss drained.⁶³ The greatest fear associated with Strangles was perhaps not the disease itself, but its potential after-effect: Strangles was thought to sometimes result in roaring, after which the horse would be termed a *roarer*.⁶⁴ A roarer would make a loud noise upon inhalation during fast work such as cantering and galloping, although in extreme cases, a noise would also be audible at a trot. A roarer was unsuitable for hard exercise, and classified as unsound, meaning that, in most cases, it was almost worthless.

Roaring had confounded horse owners, breeders, vets and farriers for some time. In 1738, Wallis, a surgeon by profession, noted that horses could exhibit a ‘wheezing’ which ‘does not proceed from any defect of the lungs but from the narrowness of the passages between the bones and grittles of the lungs,’ and that ‘these horses do not want wind; for not withstanding they blow so excessively when exercised, yet their flanks will be but little moved, and in their natural condition.’⁶⁵ By 1818, the condition had a name, and was described in detail by Richard Lawrence. Like Wallis eighty years before him, Lawrence found that ‘the disease sometimes begins by a whistling noise.’ Lawrence clearly differentiated the condition from other breathing defects, stating that ‘confirmed

⁶³ William Ryding, *Veterinary Pathology* (York: T. Wilson and R. Spence, 1801), 105 – 107. Youatt, *The Horse*, 149 – 151.

⁶⁴ “On Breeding for the Turf and the Chase: ‘Worms – Strangles’,” *The Sporting Magazine*, 97 (March 1841): 413 – 418.

⁶⁵ Thomas Wallis, *The Farrier's and Horseman's Complete Dictionary* (London: Printed for W. Owen, 1759), np.

roaring, should be distinguished from that temporary noise which is made in breathing when the animal is affected with a cold or with strangles.’⁶⁶ Thus, *roaring* had entered the equestrian lexicon.

One of the features of roaring which made it so confounding is what caused it. In 1831, Youatt observed that a roarer must have something obstructing its breathing, but post-mortem examination failed to reveal anything obvious. He identified various causes of roaring, such as an after effect of the disease Strangles, as well as anything that might contort the shape of the horse’s neck, such as the bearing rein which was in regular use on carriage horses or improper use of a curb bit on a ridden horse. He also suggested that the condition might be hereditary.⁶⁷ That a potentially hereditary condition which affected a horse’s breathing would be greatly feared by those breeding and training racehorses is self-evident.

Because roaring was such a serious defect in a horse that it would be classified as unsound, it received a great deal of attention by the mid-19th century. In the 1850s, vets were certain that roaring, when it was a true case of the condition, was caused by an obstruction to the larynx or windpipe. By dissecting confirmed roarers, vets found that roarers showed varying deformities in their larynx. The veterinary surgeon James White was in favour of the theory that ‘an affection of the nerves...by which the muscles are thrown out of action, and therefore become absorbed’ was a cause of roaring, and not, as some others had suggested, a result of roaring.⁶⁸

Vets also tried to classify the condition on the basis of how long the horse had shown symptoms of roaring, whether it had suffered from a cold or other disease

⁶⁶ Richard Lawrence, *The Complete Farrier and British Sportsman* (London: Printed for Thomas Kelly, 1818), 98-99.

⁶⁷ Youatt, *The Horse*, 160-163. “On Roaring,” *New Sporting Magazine*, 4, no. 23 (March 1833): 346 – 350.

⁶⁸ James White, *A Compendium of Veterinary Art* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1851), 139-140.

which could bring about roaring, and whether it could be spasmodic in nature. If roaring was perceived to have been brought on by another illness, the goal was to bring out the inflammation by the application of ointments and blistering, and sometimes by giving oral medication such as iodine. In ‘hopeless cases’, the only possible remedy was a tracheotomy, which could enable the horse to perform its duties as before, although the animal was disfigured as a result.⁶⁹ Vets were largely powerless against roaring; sometimes the owner or trainer simply had to find a different use for the horse which required less exertion than racing or hunting.⁷⁰

Glanders and its co-disease, Farcy, both which could also be transmitted to humans, were easily the most feared horse diseases in Britain as they seemed to generate spontaneously within horse populations. Yet, they received remarkably little attention among sporting (especially racing) authors of the 19th century. Although Glanders and Farcy were initially identified as two separate illnesses, by the 1830s most vets agreed that they were the same disease, merely with different symptoms. Diagnosing Glanders and Farcy, however, was complicated because, in some cases, a horse might not show symptoms for long periods of time, and early symptoms could easily be confused with those of Strangles—a high fever and puss-filled tumours.⁷¹ Yet, despite the serious threat the disease posed to the wider equine population, the illness seems to have bypassed racing stables; I have failed to find a single mention of a training stable being afflicted with the disease in the 19th century. One possible reason for this may be the location of training stables away from urban centres, and the trend towards keeping racehorses in small ranges of loose boxes. This theory falls into difficulty, however, when we consider that racehorses were frequently being

⁶⁹ William Percivall, *The Diseases of the Chest and Air Passages of the Horse* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1853), 40 -60.

⁷⁰ White, *A Compendium of Veterinary Art*, p.140

⁷¹ Richard Vines, *A Practical Treatise on Glanders and Farcy in the Horse* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1830). Youatt, *The Horse*, 123. William Percivall, *Glanders and Farcy in the Horse* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1845).

walked from place to place in the early 19th century, and would have required stabling during their lengthy journeys which might not have been equal to the stabling at home, and could have come into contact with infected horses there. It is also possible that records which referenced Glanders in a racing context have simply been lost.

A racehorse's legs, however, were 'a source of daily anxiety and attention' for racehorse trainers.⁷² In fact, leg injuries were so common among racehorses that the veterinary surgeon John Lawrence was certain that racehorse trainers possessed greater expertise in treating them than other grooms.⁷³ Moreover, because racehorses were primarily exercised in a walk and a canter or gallop, lameness could be masked to some extent. (Lameness in horses is most visible in a trot.) As a result, a racehorse might continue to be exercised despite being lame, which could result in long-term damage which would be difficult to repair.⁷⁴ Racehorse trainers, therefore, needed to be able to identify the early warning signs of lameness and respond with the appropriate treatment. The alternative to this was to wilfully ignore the issue. As Darvill's training manual makes evident, if other horses became lame, they were treated and rested, and, until they were deemed well enough to be put to work again, a different horse was used instead. Racing, however, did not permit such a substitution.⁷⁵

There is evidence to suggest that racehorse trainers primarily treated leg injuries themselves except in cases of severe injury, although piecing together an accurate picture of who treated leg injuries, and at which point a veterinary surgeon was called (if at all) is difficult. Darvill's list of medicines and related

⁷² Cecil, *Stable Practice*, 133.

⁷³ John Lawrence, *The History and Delineation of the Horse, in all his Varieties* (London: Albion Press, 1809), 243.

⁷⁴ W. C. Spooner, *A Treatise on the Structure, Functions, and Diseases of the Foot and Leg of the Horse* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1840), 209 – 210.

⁷⁵ Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment and Training of the English Race Horse*, Vol. 1, 111 – 118.

equipment that racehorse trainers should possess certainly suggests that trainers frequently doubled as in-house horse doctors when a horse became lame, and that outside expertise was mostly called upon when the trainer's own treatment methods had failed to deliver a cure.⁷⁶

Less serious leg injuries which resulted in lameness, such as a mild sprain or 'sore shins', were understood to be a local inflammation. The concern was that this inflammation might spread and disturb the equilibrium of the horse's body. Treatment ranged from reducing the horse's exercise, bathing the affected leg in warm or iced water, applying a poultice, administering physic, and, in some cases, a combination of bleeding and blistering. The horse could be bled from the affected limb or hoof, which was believed to be the most beneficial in reducing the inflammation due to its proximity to the sprain.⁷⁷ The goal of bleeding was to reduce the quantity of blood in the horse's body, which had a 'sedative effect' upon the heart. This sedation effect was understood to reduce the amount of blood being pumped to the inflamed part of the body, and thought to result in a lessening of the inflammation, and a reduction in heat. Bleeding might also be combined with a 'cooling regimen' of physic and cooling feed, such as bran mash.⁷⁸ As a result, the practice of bleeding was closely related to the wider

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 151-152.

⁷⁷ William Percivall, *Lameness in the Horse* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1849) 354.

⁷⁸ Thomas Boardman, *A Dictionary of the Veterinary Art* (London: George Kearsley, 1805), NP, see: 'Inflammation'. Delabere Blaine, *The Outlines of the Veterinary Art* (London: Longman, Hurst, Reese, Orme & Brown, 1816), 605 – 608, 627. Hugh Ferguson, *Bloodletting as a Remedy for the Diseases Incidental to the Horse and Other Animals* (Dublin: William Curry, Jun., and Company, 1845). Percivall, *Lameness in the Horse*, 33 – 34. See also: K. Codell Carter, *The Decline of Therapeutic Bloodletting and the Collapse of Traditional Medicine* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2012). John Harley Warner, "Therapeutic Explanation and the Edinburgh Bloodletting Controversy: Two Perspectives on the Medical Meaning of Science in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *Medical History*, 24, No. 3 (July 1980): 241 – 258. K. Codell Carter, "Change of Type as an Explanation for the Decline of

concerns of racehorse training in the first half of the 19th century, which aimed to bring the animal into peak condition without the animal's body becoming 'heated' and debilitated by the effects of exercise, high feeding, and stabling.

Blistering was achieved by applying a liquid or ointment containing mustard or ground 'blister beetles', such as Spanish flies, sometimes with the addition of calomel. The irritant created a blister, which was thought to draw out internal inflammation, and encourage healing by the process of 'counter-irritation'—creating a new, 'artificial' site of inflammation.⁷⁹ Counter-irritation theory was based on the idea that a 'disorder' in a part of the body constituted a part of the body being irritated or inflamed, and that the 'exciting causes' of the disorder could be redirected to a different part of the animal (and human) body—the body being incapable of having more than one seat of disorder at any one time.⁸⁰

Once the horse was sound again, the limb which had suffered the sprain might be fired. The procedure of firing, which involved burning the surface tissue around the site of a former injury, was thought to create a 'counter irritation' which would 'create a new and long-continued demand for the blood that would otherwise be employed in forming morbid deposits' which lasted significantly longer than the counter-irritation caused by blistering. However, the counter-irritation effect of firing could be extended by adding a blister to the site a few

Therapeutic Bloodletting," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, 41, no. 1 (2010): 1-11.

⁷⁹ Delabere Blaine, *A Domestic Treatise on the Diseases of Horses and Dogs* (London: T. Boosey, 1810), 38 – 41. Youatt, *The Horse*, 1831, 322 – 323. T. B. Bracy Clark, *Hippiatria; or; the Surgery and Medicine of Horses* (London: Printed for the Author, 1838), 16 - 19. T. B. Johnson, *The Sportsman's Cyclopaedia* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1848), 64 – 65.

⁸⁰ See, for example: A. B. Granville, *Counter-Irritation: Its Principles and Practice* (London: John Churchill, 1838). Setons were a further form of counter-irritant in widespread use in 19th century veterinary medicine, but were rarely recommended in connection with leg injuries common to racehorses.

days after the operation had been performed.⁸¹ The long-term benefit of firing was that it was believed to strengthen the limb once it had healed — the healed tissue forming a ‘permanent bandage’ which would prevent the injury from recurring.⁸²

Although Darvill listed firing irons as one of the tools that racehorse trainers should have on site, the operation of firing (and it was always referred to as an operation) was primarily the preserve of veterinary surgeons.⁸³ Furthermore, firing was delicate process, which required the operator to determine the correct depth of the firing. If the firing was too light, it had little effect; too deep, and it produced severe scarring and might do more harm than good.⁸⁴ Because firing caused the horse significant pain, the animal needed to be restrained so that the procedure could be carried out correctly without anyone being injured. The horse could be hindered from kicking with hobbles around its legs, and by applying a twitch on the nose.⁸⁵ A further handler could also hold up the leg opposite to the

⁸¹ John Hind, *Veterinary Surgery and Practice of Medicine* (London: Whittaker, Treacher & Co., 1829), 35. W. C. Spooner, *A Treatise on the Structure, Functions, and Diseases of the Foot and Leg of the Horse* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1840), 283. Bracy Clark, *Hippiatria; or; the Surgery and Medicine of Horses* (London: Printed for the Author, 1838), 43.

⁸² Delabere Blaine, *A Domestic Treatise on the Diseases of Horses and Dogs* (London: T. Boosey, 1810), 126-127. Delabere Blaine, *The Outlines of the Veterinary Art* (London: Longman, Hurst, Reese, Orme & Brown, 1816), 493. William Osmer, with additions by J. Hinds, *A Treatise on the Horse: Its Diseases, Lameness and Improvement...*, 5th ed., (London: Sherwood, Gilbert and Piper, 1830), 57 – 58. Youatt, *The Horse*, 1831, 246 – 247. Cotherstone, “On Training the Race-Horse,” *New Sporting Magazine*, 8, no. 44, (August 1844): 99- 108.

⁸³ Youatt, *The Horse*, 324 – 325. Cotherstone, “On Training the Race-Horse,” *New Sporting Magazine*, 8, no. 44, (August 1844): 102. Cecil, *Stable Practice*, 137.

⁸⁴ Charles Clark, “On Firing Horses,” *The Lancet*, 15, no. 380 (11 December, 1830): 365 – 367.

⁸⁵ A twitch is a loop of rope or metal attached to a handle. It is wrapped tightly around the horse’s upper lip, which restrains the animal to the extent that it appears to produce sedation.

one to be fired. The alternative to this process was to cast the horse, so that it was lying on the floor. This method provided the greatest restraint, but the position of the legs in a horse that had been cast could make it more difficult to fire correctly.⁸⁶ While physic, blistering and bleeding all required the person administering them to accurately assess the horse's constitution, firing did not hinge upon this. Rather, the primary concern was effectively restraining the horse so that the skin on the leg could be burned to the appropriate depth. This suggests that 'constitutional treatment' of ill health could be performed by the trainer himself, while more invasive procedures such as firing required calling in outside expertise.

Although firing was thought to be a long-term cure for a leg injury, opinions differed as to whether a horse would stand the demands of training afterwards. The veterinary surgeon William Youatt was certain that any horse would require between six to twelve months at grass after having been fired, and would never be suitable for racing purposes again.⁸⁷ The sporting writer Nimrod agreed, although he did mention that there were a few 'exceptions to the general rule,' where a racehorse had been successful afterwards.⁸⁸ In 1849, however, William Percivall was certain that firing was 'the sole means we have at present at command to save the 'broken down' horse from the slaughter-house... By the iron has many a broken-down hunter and many a racer, been joyously restored to his station and rank in the field...'⁸⁹

The veterinary surgeon John Bowles evidently realised that treatments such as firing, which necessitated taking the racehorse out of training for a lengthy

⁸⁶ W. C. Spooner, *A Treatise on the Structure, Functions, and Diseases of the Foot and Leg of the Horse* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1840), 283 – 286.

⁸⁷ Youatt, *The Horse*, 248.

⁸⁸ 'Nimrod', *Remarks on the Condition of Hunters, the Choice of Horses and Their Management* (London: M. A. Pittman, 1831), 324 – 325.

⁸⁹ Percivall, *Lameness in the Horse*, 357.

period while the animal recovered, was not always viable because of the horse's upcoming racing engagements. In his obituary, Bowles is quoted as having said,

‘If [the horse] has three engagements in April, where is the use... of giving him up, that by rest and regular treatment, a cure may be performed in May--- during which time something inferior may have run away with the stakes? No; keep him going as well as you can til these are over, and then, as the common people say, let Doctor Green [read: turning out to grass] cure what the farrier cannot.’⁹⁰

Bowles' statement offers a rare insight into the realities of treating injured racehorses. He was willing to prioritise human needs over equine ones, 'patching up' a horse that might have been better off being rested and treated, and instead providing the best treatment that he could, while still enabling racehorse owner and trainer to run the animal in the races they wanted. Like Lawrence, Bowles also accepted that veterinary medicine did not have a cure for everything. This 'back to nature' approach for curing lameness and disease was a widely used form of treatment among racehorse trainers and veterinary surgeons, and mirrors the use of grass for physicking horses discussed in the previous chapter.

Severe injuries, however, could not be 'patched up', and necessitated stopping training altogether. The greatest concern was that a racehorse might 'break down' in the process of training or during a race. A horse that was said to have 'broken down' had ruptured a ligament or tendon in a fore or hind leg, or sustained a severe sprain: it could no longer walk.⁹¹ In some cases, a horse might break its leg. Such major injuries had little to no forewarning, and occurred from

⁹⁰ "The Death of Mr. John Bowles," *Cambridge Chronicle and Journal*, 14 February, 1834, 4.

⁹¹ To complicate matters, veterinary authors disagreed as to what constituted 'breaking down'. Could only a ruptured ligament or a snapped tendon be called 'breaking down'? Or was it acceptable to use the same term to refer to a severe sprain? Sporting writers, on the other hand, rarely specified what, exactly, they meant by the term, suggesting that they assumed their readers understood its meaning. For the purpose of this chapter, an understanding that the term was used to denote a severe injury to the lower leg which caused instant, severe lameness will suffice.

one moment to the next, usually when the horse was galloping. Numerous veterinary texts from the period singled racehorses out as being more liable to breaking down than other horses, although there was little consensus as to why this was the case.⁹² Such serious leg injuries tended to make a horse unsuitable for racing purposes, and were often reason to end the animal's life.⁹³ This is not to say, however, that veterinary surgeons did not try to cure horses with major injuries; as early as 1829, a veterinary surgeon attempted to save a racehorse by setting its broken leg.⁹⁴ While a broken-down racehorse was unlikely to be able to race again, it might still be useful (and profitable) for breeding purposes, which must have served as significant motivation for experimental treatment.⁹⁵

Innovation and its Limitations

Despite the changes in training methods which had taken place between the turn of the 19th century and the 1880s, the same injuries and ailments continued to plague racehorses in the late 19th century. Racehorses were still prone to leg injuries sustained during fast exercise, and influenza and coughs were not uncommon.⁹⁶ As an unknown writer remarked in *Baily's Magazine* in 1882, vets

⁹² Richard Lawrence, *The Complete Farrier and British Sportsman* (London: Thomas Kelly, c. 1835), 204. Hind, *Veterinary Surgery and Practice of Medicine*, 486 – 487. 'A Young Sportsman,' "On Training," *The Sporting Magazine*, 57 (January 1821), 170. William Youatt, *The Obligation and Extent of Humanity to Brutes* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown Green and Longman, 1839), 95 – 98. John Scott, *The Sportsman's Repository* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1845), 177 -179.

⁹³ Cotherstone, "On Training the Race-Horse", August 1844, 101. William Percivall, *Twelve Lectures on the Form and Action of the Horse* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1850), 75. 'D. E.', "On Lameness in the Horse," *New Sporting Magazine*, 12, no. 72 (April 1837), 251 – 253.

⁹⁴ "Sporting Incidents," *Berkshire Chronicle*, 30 May, 1829.

⁹⁵ R. H. Copperthwaite, *The Turf, the Racehorse, and Stud Farm* (London: Day and Son Limited, 1865), 278 – 279.

⁹⁶ "The Derby Week at Epsom," *Sporting Life*, 25 May, 1872, 2. "In and About Newmarket," *Sporting Life*, 7 February, 1893, 2. F. Smith, "Sprains of Tendons and Ligaments," *The Journal of Comparative Pathology and Therapeutics*, 7, no. 1 (1894):

in Newmarket and other towns with large numbers of racehorses stabled nearby, ‘must see almost as many cases of breaking down, split pasterns, broken blood-vessels, &c., not to mention juvenile ailments apart from accidents, in one year as an ordinary practitioner does in ten.’⁹⁷

Despite the increasing number of veterinary surgeons servicing racehorses in Newmarket, trainers also continued to place great faith in the curative powers of ‘nature’ when veterinary science failed, and horses were sometimes turned out into a field to ‘see what nature can do.’⁹⁸ In the case of an unwell-looking horse, one trainer remarked, ‘She needs some sun and warm weather.’⁹⁹ Furthermore, methods of treating lameness, and illnesses such as influenza had changed very little over the decades, and counter-irritation treatments were still widespread.¹⁰⁰ Trainers tended to treat sprains themselves with bandages and cold water applied to the legs, and blistered when they thought necessary.¹⁰¹

Lameness continued to be a constant concern. There was no guarantee that a horse would fully recover from a severe sprain or a ruptured tendon or ligament, and horses were euthanized when the injury was deemed incurable. Where there was hope for recovery, vets and trainers continued to rely on firing to bring their

1-18. “Our Racing Prophet,” *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 19 October, 1895, 230. “Our Racing Prophet,” *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 3 July, 1897, 722. “The Two-Year-Olds of 1897,” *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 27 November, 1897, 487. “Our Racing Prophet,” *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 22 April, 1899, 314.

⁹⁷ “Veterinary Surgeons,” *Baily’s Monthly Magazine of Sports and Pastimes*, October 1, 1882, 341.

⁹⁸ Letter from George Lambton, January 29, 1905, Knowsley Hall Archive.

⁹⁹ Letter from John Watson, April 5, 1917. Rothschild Archive, 000/1373/8/8.

¹⁰⁰ John Gerrard, “Fashion in the Treatment of Disease,” *Veterinary Journal*, 5 (1877): 412 – 418. “Veterinarian,” *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 22 May, 1880, 246 – 247. M. Horace Hayes, “Among Horses,” *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 20 August, 1881, 542 – 543.

¹⁰¹ John Porter, *Kingsclere* (London: Spottiswoode, 1896), 28-30.

horses back to health, just as they had done previously— with mixed results.¹⁰² Although it was suggested during the vivisection debate in House of Lords in 1876 that anaesthetics such as chloroform were not being used when horses were fired, a number of veterinary surgeons wrote into the *Veterinary Journal* refuting this.¹⁰³ Considering that veterinary surgeons had been saying for decades that they recognised firing was extremely painful, this is hardly surprising; the procedure had long been regarded as a necessary evil. When the unbeaten colt and Derby hopeful The Tetrarch sustained a leg injury as a two-year-old in the autumn of 1913, it was widely reported the following spring that the horse had been fired in both forelegs by the Epsom vet John Coleman; firing was followed by blistering, as had long been the custom.¹⁰⁴ A correspondent for the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* noted that, ‘a fired horse has yet to win the Derby.’¹⁰⁵ The longevity of firing as a practice demonstrates the extent to which the theory of counter-irritation was alive and well in early 20th equine veterinary medicine.¹⁰⁶ The Tetrarch never did run in the Derby, and was retired to stud.

¹⁰² Edward Moorhouse and John Porter, *John Porter of Kingsclere* (London: Grant Richards, 1919), 84 – 84. “Firing,” *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 27 December 1890, 502- 503. H. W. Hoo, “On the Operation of Firing Horses,” *Sporting Life*, 8 May, 1894, 2.

¹⁰³ (NO. 85.) Second Reading, HL Deb 22 May 1876 vol 229 cc1001-34. Benjamin H. Russel, “Firing Horses,” *Veterinary Journal*, 3 (1876): 75 – 76. John W. Hill, “Firing Horses,” *Veterinary Journal*, 3 (1876): 153.

¹⁰⁴ “The Tetrarch: Statement by Mr. Persse,” *The Times*, 16 May, 1914, 8.

¹⁰⁵ C. Assheton Luckman, “The Lure of The Tetrarch,” *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 28 March, 1914, 154-155.

¹⁰⁶ Firing, and the belief that it creates a supportive ‘bandage’, has not completely died out today, and the practice remains legal in Ireland, causing some British horse owners to send their animals to Ireland to be fired. An Observer report in 2000 indicated that the practice was still widespread within racing. See: Brendan Pittaway and Antony Barnett, “Top Horses Endure ‘Barbaric’ Branding,” *The Observer*, 12 March, 2000.

Fractures sustained during training or at a race continued to end a racehorse's career, and often its life.¹⁰⁷ But a fracture was not always a death sentence, however. The Newmarket-based veterinary surgeon W. E. Livock had a particularly good reputation for treating fractures, as did Coleman in Epsom.¹⁰⁸ In September 1911, for example, the Duke of Westminster's racehorse Swynford had 'a very narrow squeak for his life.' During a race, the horse broke his leg. Livock was quoted in a newspaper, saying, 'The injury is very bad indeed, and there is considerable doubt as to whether it will be possible to save him for the stud.'¹⁰⁹ In the case of a fracture, horses that might be saved were usually placed in slings in a stable, where the slings would take some of the weight off the broken leg and, in effect, immobilise the horse. Swynford did not respond well to this, and had to remain loose in his box, demonstrating the impact that equine behaviour had on veterinary treatment methods. Swynford appeared to be healing well despite being out of a sling, but one evening, he collicked, and Livock was concerned about the leg sustaining further damage, because it had been 'quite impossible to keep the horse on his legs'. Swynford did eventually recover from his ordeal, thereby adding to Livock's track record of successfully treating fractures. By February the following year, Swynford left Livock's practice and Lambton hoped to be able to turn the horse out into a paddock to fully recuperate before standing him at stud.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ "A Racehorse Shot," *Bury and Norwich Post*, 19 November, 1895, 8. "Gossip from the Course," *Manchester Courier*, 2 October, 1907, 2.

¹⁰⁸ "Gossip from the Course," *Manchester Courier*, 18 October 1905, 2. "Sporting Items," *Manchester Courier*, 22 September, 1906, 9. "World of Sport," *Portsmouth Evening News*, 18 January, 1911, 3.

¹⁰⁹ "Swynford Smashes a Fetlock: Racing Career Ended," *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 30 September, 1911, 13. Letters from George Lambton and W. Livock, 10 Nov. 1911, 14 January 1912, Knowsley Hall Estate Archives.

¹¹⁰ Letter from George Lambton, 23 Feb. 1912, Knowsley Hall Estate Archives. "A Veterinary Triumph," *Portsmouth Evening News*, 10 February, 1912, 3. "The Condition of Swynford," *Yorkshire Post*, 10 February, 1912, 16.

Salvaging an injured stallion for stud purposes had great financial implications for the horse's owner. Accounts from the Duke of Portland's training stables and stud show that the training establishment was always loss-making, and poorly performing horses were sometimes given away. Successful, retired racehorse stallions kept racing profitable by the income generated from their stud fees, and stallions were insured in case of their death. In 1891, the Duke's six stallions generated £11,704 in stud fees; the cost of their upkeep, in comparison, was only £780. By 1897, the nine stallions at stud generated more than triple that sum, £35,839. The cost of their upkeep was a paltry £1,170.¹¹¹ Considering these figures, it is undeniable that profit will have played some motive in trying to save a severely injured horse's life, although this was never directly addressed by any authors of the period.

During the late 19th century, roaring continued to preoccupy and confound those with direct connections to horse racing, and veterinary surgeons alike. In 1888, the German veterinary surgeon Dr. Moeller revealed that, 'because roaring is usually incurable, medicinal treatment is used experimentally on valuable horses.'¹¹² This was certainly the case in England as well. Some exasperated racehorse owners and trainers were making use of all means available to retain the usefulness of their animals, whether it was by having a permanent tracheotomy tube inserted into their throats, or the use of electricity— both procedures which required the expertise of a veterinary surgeon. The influential veterinary surgeon George Fleming was an advocate of the latter form of treatment which he had invented in circa 1882, whereby two electrodes attached to a faradic battery were used on the side of the horse's neck at the level of the atrophied muscles to shock them into activity. This procedure, he believed,

¹¹¹ Wellbeck Stud, Statement of Stallion Account for 1891, P1F10/2/1/16, Nottingham University Special Collections. The Duke of Portland's Racing Stud Account for year 1897, P1F10/2/1/28, Nottingham University Special Collections.

¹¹² Dr. H. Moeller, *Das Kehlkopf-Pfeifen der Pferde (Hemiplegia laryngis) und seine operative Behandlung* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke, 1888), 59.

would reverse the process if the horse had only recently shown signs of roaring.¹¹³

Fleming utilised faradization treatment on the successful racehorse Ormonde, who developed roaring in 1886, at the peak of his racing career.¹¹⁴ Fleming viewed Ormonde turning into a roarer as an opportunity rather than a disappointment; if vets could find a cure for the condition then, in his words, ‘we shall have achieved something worthy of medical science in this latter half of the nineteenth century.’¹¹⁵ In a later report on Ormonde’s progress, Fleming attributed Ormonde’s final successes on the race course in part to his treatment method, but not everyone was convinced by his claim, and instead stated that Ormonde had clearly been retired from racing because faradization had been proven useless.¹¹⁶ John Porter, the horse’s trainer, confirmed this in his autobiography; they had tried everything to treat Ormonde’s condition, but it had all been useless. From this incident, Porter concluded, ‘All the so-called cures are failures. Once a roarer, always a roarer. Let the horse alone.’¹¹⁷

The other puzzling aspect of roaring was the potentially hereditary nature of the condition. Although the idea that roaring could be transmitted from sire or dam to offspring had been around for some time, the theory was far from uniform. Opinions varied from recommending that all roaring stallions be castrated, to

¹¹³ It appears that Fleming had veterinary and surgical instrument manufacturers Arnold & Sons construct a custom faradic battery and electrodes designed for the treatment of roaring.

¹¹⁴ George Fleming, “Laryngismus Paralytica (‘Roaring’),” *Veterinary Journal*, 14 (1882): 94. George Fleming, “The Pathology and Treatment of Roaring,” *Veterinary Journal*, 24 (1887): 246 – 247. George Fleming, *Roaring in Horses: Its History, Nature, Causes, Prevention and Treatment* (London: Balliere, Tindall & Cox, 1889), 134-135.

¹¹⁵ George Fleming, “The Pathology and Treatment of Roaring,” *Veterinary Journal*, 24 (1887): 247.

¹¹⁶ T. Hopkin, “Roaring,” *Veterinary Journal*, 26 (1888): 321. William Day, *The Horse - How to Breed and Rear Him* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1890), 131-132.

¹¹⁷ Porter, *Kingsclere*, 1898, 114-115

continuing to use them for breeding purposes, because not *all* of the offspring tended to be roarsers.¹¹⁸ What experts did agree on by the 1880s, however, was that roaring, whatever its causes were, exhibited by paralysis of muscles in the larynx, which caused the dilator of the larynx to atrophy, usually on the left side. In a healthy horse, these two dilator muscles would draw the arytenoid cartilage and vocal chords backwards and outwards on an intake of breath. As this could not occur when one side was paralysed, the arytenoid cartilage on the side where the muscles were paralysed would block the free flowing of air. This resulted in the noise which was the tell-tale sign of a roarer. It was usually observed during fast work, when the horse would need to take in more air.¹¹⁹

Chloroform was in use on horses as a general anaesthetic by this time, and cocaine was being used experimentally as a local anaesthetic.¹²⁰ This made an operative intervention on roarsers a viable remedy, whereas previously it might not have been. Experimental use of faradization and exercise regimens had proven rather unreliable. If a horse was diagnosed as a chronic roarer, medicinal treatment was believed to be impractical, because the dilator muscle had already atrophied and the other compensated. Therefore, surgery was determined to be the best cure. Having been inspired by experimental operations in the late 1870s, Fleming sought to develop his own surgical cure. In 1889, he published *Roaring in Horses: Its History, Nature, Causes, Prevention and Treatment* in which he detailed his own theories about roaring, as well as modes of treatment, in which he advocated both preventative and surgical methods. Under general anaesthesia, the arytenoid cartilage and vocal cord were removed, which cured the horse of

¹¹⁸ Hopkin, "Roaring," 316-317.

¹¹⁹ George Fleming, *Roaring in Horses: Its History, Nature, Causes, Prevention and Treatment* (London: Balliere, Tindall & Cox, 1889), 59 – 127. Hopkin, "Roaring," 313 – 321.

¹²⁰ Benjamin W. Richardson, *On Local Anaesthesia by Ether Spray as a Means for the Entire Extinction of Pain in Operations on the Inferior Animals* (London: John Churchill and Sons, 1867). G. Gartside Mayor, "Cocaine in Veterinary Surgery," *Veterinary Journal*, 20 (1885): 334 – 336. R. Roberts, "Chloroform: Its Uses as an Anaesthetic in Veterinary Practice," *Veterinary Journal*, 20 (1885): 10 – 14.

roaring, and still enabled it to neigh, eat and swallow as normal. Fleming had operated on thirty horses, and of these, twenty-two had been cured—Ormonde was not among them.¹²¹ Evidently not everyone was convinced by the alleged efficacy of Fleming's operation, but others sprang to his defence, stating Fleming's success rate of 90% and criticising 'a want of scientific spirit' among Fleming's detractors.¹²²

In 1892, the French vet P. J. Cadiot's book on roaring was published in English. J. Dollar, the translator, assured readers that 'that the present work represents the latest development in operative methods for the alleviation of roaring.'¹²³ Cadiot gave preference to the German vet Moeller's method over Fleming's; Moeller left the vocal chords intact, removing only the arytenoid cartilage. Like Fleming, Cadiot gave detailed instructions for performing the operation as well as its after-care. Thus, within less than five years, there were two manuals on the surgical treatment of roaring.

However, despite the race to cure roaring that took place between veterinary surgeons, these innovative surgical cures appear to have been relatively unpopular within racing circles. In 1901 it was reported that, 'it is quite a common thing to see up to half a dozen horses in one afternoon's steeplechasing with the tube in their throats.'¹²⁴ Figures provided by Hobday, who so prided himself in having perfected the operation for roaring in the early years of the 20th century that people would say that their horse had been 'Hobdayed', indicate the same. Together with the American vet Dr. Williams, Hobday had operated on over 500 horses in Britain by 1912. Of these, Hobday reported on 100 horses,

¹²¹ "The Surgical Cure of Roaring," *The Veterinary Journal*, 27 (1888): 276. Fleming, *Roaring in Horses*, 1889,

¹²² "Laryngo-Tracheotomy in Relation to Roaring," *The Veterinary Journal*, 28 (1889): 121-126.

¹²³ P.J Cadiot, *Roaring in Horses: Its Pathology and Treatment*, trans. J. Dollar (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co, 1892), 5.

¹²⁴ Charles Richardson, *The English Turf: A Record of Horses and Courses* (London: Methuen & Co., 1901), 10.

only one of which was a racehorse.¹²⁵ As Hobday observed in 1913, the main drawback of the operation for racehorses was the long downtime. A horse would need to be rested for ‘a minimum of two months, and better three’, with a further six months to bring the horse back into full condition.¹²⁶ Taking into account the relatively short racing career of Thoroughbred horses, such a long downtime must have been considerable deterrent, which goes some way to explain the prevalence of tracheotomy tubes on roaring racehorses, which had no downtime to speak of. During their quest to find a cure for roaring, veterinary surgeons had failed to consider what John Bowles had realised in the early 19th century: to be adopted in racing circles, veterinary treatment needed to consider the horse’s upcoming races. Any treatment method which could not fit around this timetable was bound to prove unpopular.

This is not, however, to imply that racehorse owners and trainers ignored all advice and scientific innovation from the veterinary profession. As the prevention of Glanders and its co-disease Farcy became a more prominent public health concern in the latter decades of the 19th century, the racing establishment took increasing precautions to keep glandered animals far away from their own.¹²⁷ Towards the end of the 19th century, changes in the railway network

¹²⁵ Frederick Hobday, “A Report Upon the Permanent Value of the Roaring Operation as Evidenced by the Present Condition of 100 Horses which have been Satisfactorily Operated Upon for ‘Roaring’ From 18 Months to 2 1/1 Years Ago,” *The Veterinary Journal* (New Series), 19 (1912): 207 – 218.

¹²⁶ Frederick Hobday, “The Fourth's Season's Report Upon the Value of the Ventricle Stripping Operation for ‘Roaring’,” *The Veterinary Journal* (New Series), 20 (1913): 159 – 170, quote p. 160.

¹²⁷ George Fleming, *A Manual of Veterinary Sanitary Science*, Vol. 1 (London: Chapman & Hall, 1875), 482- 485, 505, 545 – 546. “Glanders in London,” *The Veterinary Journal*, 10 (1880): 250. “Recent Researches into the Pathology of Glanders,” *The Veterinary Journal*, 16 (1883): 264-267. James Lambert, “The Germ Theory of Disease,” *The Veterinary Journal*, 17 (1883): 14. William Hunting, *Glanders* (London: H&W. Brown, 1887). “Review - Glanders: How it arises and spreads; how to

meant that the practice of ‘re-boxing’, that is walking horses in hand from one railway station to another (not uncommonly in central London, the established hot-bed of Glanders), was no longer necessary.¹²⁸ Wealthy racehorse owners further reduced the risk of disease transmission during transport by purchasing their own private boxes for railway transport.¹²⁹ When East Suffolk had a confirmed case of Glanders in 1904, the Newmarket Urban District Council sprang into action, and, at a meeting in Norwich, ordered that the circus, in which a glandered horse had been destroyed, be prevented from setting up its tent on the Severalls at Newmarket to avoid transmission of the disease to ‘valuable racehorses’.¹³⁰ When there was an outbreak of suspected Sceptic Pneumonia at the Earl of Derby’s stud, no expense was spared, and Livock inoculated all the horses in the stable either with a custom or generic serum, the vanguard of equine disease prevention in 1916.¹³¹ The racing establishment was open to investing in expensive private horseboxes and cutting edge treatment methods to reduce and prevent disease, provided that such methods suited the racing calendar.

prevent it; and how to stamp it out by W. Hunting,” *The Veterinary Journal*, 26 (1888): 123.

¹²⁸ M. Horrace Hayes, *Veterinary Notes for Horse Owners* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1903), 501- 502. William Hunting, *Glanders: A Clinical Treatise* (London: H. & W. Brown, 1908), 16.

¹²⁹ Porter, *Kingsclere*, 1898, 203. Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire, et. al., *Racing and Steeple-Chasing*, 43.

¹³⁰ “Outbreak of Glanders in Suffolk- Newmarket’s Fear,” *Cambridge Independent Press*, 30 September, 1904, 3.

¹³¹ Letter from George Lambton to ‘Eddie’, 12 Feb., 1919, Knowsley Hall Archives. J. F. Tuff, “A Report Upon Some Cases Treated by Vaccine Therapy in Veterinary Practice,” *The Veterinary Journal* (New Series), 22 (1915), 72 – 74.

Conclusions

The sport of horse racing in the 19th and early 20th century relied upon people to ensure the health of equine athletes, and to treat them in cases of lameness and disease. Trainers, head lads and stud grooms were responsible for the day-to-day monitoring of a racehorse's health, and spotting ailments. They also had some medical instruments and medicines at their disposal, and engaged in some 'horse-doctoring' themselves. Although a few reports in the early 19th century suggested that no veterinary surgeons had been able to establish themselves in Newmarket, this assertion was plainly false. By the late 19th century, a number of veterinary surgeons had established practices in Newmarket and other centres of horse-racing such as Epsom. Equine dentists provided an alternative, specialist service. Thus, horse racing was serviced by a marketplace of equine healthcare providers including trainers, veterinary surgeons and horse dentists. The increase in the number of veterinary surgeons in Newmarket between the 1880s and the turn of the 20th century did not indicate a radical change in the relationship between trainers and veterinary surgeons; racehorse trainers continued to remain sceptical about the abilities of the veterinary profession to treat and cure lameness.

Maintaining health and treating disease relied heavily upon ideas of constitution, inflammation and counter-irritation. These concepts were closely related with wider ideas of restoring balance within the horse's body, and therefore bore a significant degree of similarity with racehorse training practices. Considering these factors, racehorse trainers were the logical healthcare providers in many cases, because they needed to develop a detailed understanding of each horse's constitution in order to train the animal successfully. A veterinary surgeon, who saw the horse for the first time was unlikely to have such an in-depth understanding of the animal, unless, of course, the trainer relayed it to the vet himself. Furthermore, treatment methods such as physic, blistering and bleeding could be easily administered by a racehorse trainer as well as a veterinary surgeon. More invasive procedures such as firing, which required a different kind

of expertise to administer, and helping hands to restrain the horse, were reasons to call on a veterinary surgeon.

It might be assumed that, due to the value of racehorses, they always received the most cutting-edge treatments available. As this chapter has shown, this was plainly not the case in the 19th century. A racehorse's training regimen and future races were the key factors which influenced equine health care. As the sport trended towards races for two and three-year-old horses, the time window for possible racing success diminished, which made procedures that required a lengthy convalescence unattractive. Instead, horses might be 'patched up' where possible so that they could run in races, and then rested during the off-season; potential racing victories were prioritised over lengthy medical treatments. As a result, novel operative treatments, such as those developed for roaring in the late 19th century were of little interest to racehorse owners and trainers. Pioneering veterinary treatment which could not accommodate this were likely to have only a minimal uptake in racing circles, at best. In cases of severe leg injuries, where a horse was not expected to be able to race again, a long recovery period was of less concern, and racehorse owners sometimes pursued treatment with the goal of preserving the horse for breeding purposes— an especially lucrative repurposing of successful stallions, which might earn the owner thousands of pounds. Therefore, lengthy treatment and rehabilitation was primarily pursued for the sake of salvaging a horse for breeding purposes, and not with the goal of extending its racing career. The sport of horse racing required a quick fix, not a drawn-out cure and rehabilitation.¹³²

Racehorse owners and trainers did, however, invest significantly in preventive measures, which did not necessitate stopping a horse's training regime. Private horse transportation boxes were the most obvious example of this investment in

¹³² As will become evident in the following chapter, racehorse farriery and hoof-care also existed mostly outside of the wider animal protection debate and innovation-driven horseshoe marketplace which characterised hoof-care in 19th century Britain, thereby mirroring the relationship between veterinary medicine and horse racing during this time period.

disease prevention, but it's also important to include innovations in stable design in this discussion as well, which share obvious parallels with private horse-boxes. In many ways, despite the hurdles for veterinary medical innovation which were posed by the racing timetable, racehorse management was at the forefront of disease prevention without any conscious admission from the racing fraternity or scientific community that it was. Although diseases such as influenza did sometimes affect racing yards, Glanders, the most feared equine disease of the period, appears never to have spread to racehorses. When the possibility of racehorses coming into contact with Glandered horses was feared, swift action was taken to prevent such horses from coming to Newmarket. Racing prioritised minimising contact with disease. It is tempting to speculate that this may have caused some trainers to become exasperated by veterinary surgeons' seeming inability to effectively cure lameness. Racing was doing all it could to prevent infectious diseases, but it was often powerless to combat lameness. This was where the sport really needed veterinary medicine to come to the rescue, and, by and large, it could not.

5. Farriery and Hoof-care as Animal Welfare

‘The next unpleasant business was putting on the iron shoes; that, too, was very hard at first. My master went with me to the smith’s forge, to see that I was not hurt or got any fright. The blacksmith took my feet in his hand one after the other, and cut away some of the hoof. It did not pain me, so I stood still on three legs till he had done them all. Then he took a piece of iron the shape of my foot, and clapped it on, and drove some nails through the shoe quite into my hoof, so that the shoe was firmly on. My feet felt very stiff and heavy; but in time I got used to it.’

- Anna Sewell, *Black Beauty*, 1877.¹

Very little has been written about farriery and hoof-care in the 19th century. In fact, the historiography of farriery would suggest that the trade practically ceased to exist after the Early Modern period. The Farrier’s guild had been existence since the 14th century, when it was established with the purpose of regulating the trade within London. In 1674, the now Worshipful Company of Farriers continued to perform this same function. It stipulated that farriers completed a minimum seven-year-long apprenticeship, and members of the Company had the power to enforce standards of practice. Yet, many farriers continued to work without any formal apprenticeship, or affiliation to the Company, despite this being illegal. Those farriers who were members of the Company, however, tended to be the most highly regarded by horse owners.²

¹ A. Sewell, *Black Beauty*, 35th ed. (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1893), 20.

² Leslie B. Prince, *The Farrier and His Craft: A History of the Worshipful Company of Farriers* (London and New York: J. A. Allen, 1980), 1 – 25. F. R Bell, “The Days of the Farriers”, in *The Farrier and His Craft: A History of the Worshipful Company of Farriers*, Leslie B. Prince (London and New York: J. A. Allen, 1980), 226. Louise Hill

Michael MacKay's has shown that, during the 18th century, the long-established trade of the farrier who both doctored horses and shod them started to split into shoeing farriers, and gentlemen medical farriers.³ As discussed in Chapter 4, in 1791, the first veterinary college was established in London, which marked the formal beginning of a 'new' profession that had already been practicing for some time. Quite understandably, historians have chosen to focus on what was new—the emerging veterinary profession in the late 18th and 19th centuries—rather than the long-established trade of the farrier, or the impact that the evolution of the veterinary profession in the 19th century may have had upon farriers. However, by mostly overlooking farriery during this time period, historians have failed to recognise that farriery and hoof-care had a direct impact on many horses and humans; a lame horse could not perform well, if at all, at the work that was required of it. A person who tended horses' hooves played a vital role in society, as the old saying 'no foot, no horse' attests to.

As has already been discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the late 18th and 19th century also marked a period of gradual change in how animals were perceived and represented. Horses' bodies could be read by visual and tactile interaction for suitability for purpose, health, and for signs of suffering as well.⁴ Concerns around how humans behaved towards animals were often religious in nature, and, by the mid-19th century, an awareness of how animals were treated, and empathy for animal pain were established as markers of societal respectability. Furthermore, cruelty towards animals was linked with moral

Curth, "The Care of the Brute Beast: Animals and the Seventeenth-century Medical Market-place", *Social History of Medicine*, 15, no. 3 (2002): 378, 382 – 385.

³ Michael Hubbard MacKay, *The Rise of a Medical Specialty: The Medicalisation of Elite Equine Care c. 1680 – c. 1800* (PhD thesis: University of York, 2009).

⁴ Richard Nash, "Joy and Pity: Reading Animal Bodies in Late Eighteenth-Century Culture", *The Eighteenth Century*, 52, no. 1, (Spring 2011): 57.

deviance.⁵ By taking into consideration the changes in attitudes towards animals, the link between morality and animal protection, and the large number of horses in Britain's cities, a constructive backdrop emerges from which to consider what happened to hoof-care and farriery during the 19th century.

Although racehorses were subjects of farriery, source materials rarely singled them out for special treatment. As a result, the analysis of this chapter will encompass Britain's equine population as a whole. Yet, racehorses' hooves, like other horses' hooves, required regular attention. Therefore, by looking at shoeing and hoof-care as it relates to the wider equine population of the period, it is also possible to extrapolate valuable insights into racehorses. By examining the vibrant world of hoof-care, and the inventions and ideologies that surrounded it, we can begin to understand an important aspect of animal health-care which would have been applicable to all horses, racehorses and draught horses alike. But studying hooves allows us to do much more than this: it helps us unravel 19th century understandings of animal cruelty and protection, as writings on hoof-care grappled with ideas of health, human duty, and animal pain. It therefore enhances existing historical accounts of the growth of humanitarian sentiments towards animals during this period. Far from being a fringe topic, the best way to care for horses' hooves was enthusiastically debated among veterinarians, popular science writers and ordinary citizens. This chapter is not, however, all encompassing; the history of farriery in 19th century Britain would require an entire book in order to begin to fully capture both the trade and all outside factors impacting upon it. This chapter is, therefore, necessarily selective in its narrative, and foregrounds two recurring themes pertaining to farriery during this time period: animal protection, and veterinary surgeons' opinions of farriery.

This chapter will examine early writings by veterinary surgeons at the turn of the 19th century to show how animal protection, and a desire to raise their

⁵ James Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore and London, 1980), 39 – 59. Hilda Kean, *Animal Rights: Political and Social Change in Britain since 1800* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), 13-27.

professional profiles above those of shoeing farriers served as motivating factors for research into the anatomy of horse's hooves, and how to trim and shoe them. It will consider the main concerns around the shoeing of urban horses and pleasure horses, and the development of patent horseshoes in the 19th century, and how animal protection rhetoric was used to sell products. It will also uncover tensions between members of the veterinary profession and the workmanship of farriers, and examine technical innovations in horseshoes, and attempts made to improve the skills of those who fitted them. Finally, this chapter will uncover a group of individuals who campaigned against the use of horseshoes altogether. Through these different aspects which make up horse-shoeing and hoof-care during this time period, this chapter will engage with wider ideas of animal protection, the role of the horse in society, and society's responsibilities toward the horse. It will demonstrate that the discourse surrounding farriery and hoof-care formed a further facet of the animal protection movements in the 19th century.

Farriery and the Veterinary Profession in the early 19th Century

In 1798, Edward Coleman, Professor at the newly established Veterinary College in London, published *Observations on the Structure, Oeconomy and Diseases of the Foot of the Horse and the Principles and Practice of Shoeing*. Coleman did not mince his words. In his introduction in stated that,

‘Those who have been employed to shoe horses, and attend to their diseases, have never acted upon principles of any sort: nor could it be expected that men, totally destitute of all knowledge of the formation of the Horse's foot, and the uses of the different parts, should be able to cut the hoof and apply a shoe, without destroying, or in some degree perverting, the intentions of nature.’⁶

⁶ Edward Coleman, *Observations on the Structure, Oeconomy, and Diseases of the Foot of the Horse and the Principles and Practice of Shoeing* (T. Gillet: London, 1798), 4.

Coleman also made regular references to the ways in which poorly fitting horseshoes caused the animal discomfort and pain, and used human parallels to explain his ideas, such as a person who wore ill-fitting shoes, or Chinese foot-binding practices.⁷ ‘The common practice of shoeing has been so universally destructive,’ he lamented, ‘that unless the hoof be examined before it comes to the hands of the farrier, there is no probability that it should ever be seen in its original figure.’⁸

Coleman was not purely motivated by the desire to improve the lot of horses by changing how their feet were trimmed and shod, however. As the head of the newly established Veterinary College, Coleman was actively trying to improve the professional standing of veterinarians, and that of the College. By dismissing how farriers shod horses, and linking it to their ignorance of equine hoof anatomy, he was trying to elevate the veterinary profession above that of the farrier. Thus, in the introduction to his hoof anatomy and shoeing manual, he included an advertisement at the front of the book stating that ‘Forges are established in Grosvenor Mews, Bond Street, and Curtain Road, Finsbury Square, under the direction of the Author, for Shoeing the Horses of Subscribers and Non-subscribers of the Veterinary College.’ Each forge had a ‘Veterinary Surgeon, duly qualified’ to ensure that Coleman’s method of shoeing horses was put into practice by the on-duty shoeing-smiths.⁹ This placed the veterinary surgeon in a supervisory role, hierarchically superior to the shoeing-smith. Furthermore, his assertion that methods of shoeing horses had remained unchanged for centuries was a blatant falsehood. The veterinary surgeon William Moorcroft, in his *Cursory Account of the Various Methods of Shoeing Horses Hitherto Practiced* (1800) described numerous types of shoes which had been trialled throughout the previous century.¹⁰

⁷ Ibid., 19, 22.

⁸ Ibid., 18.

⁹ Ibid., vii

¹⁰ William Moorcroft, *Cursory Account of the Various Methods of Shoeing Horses Hitherto Practised; with Incidental Observations* (Dublin: D. Graisberry, 1800).

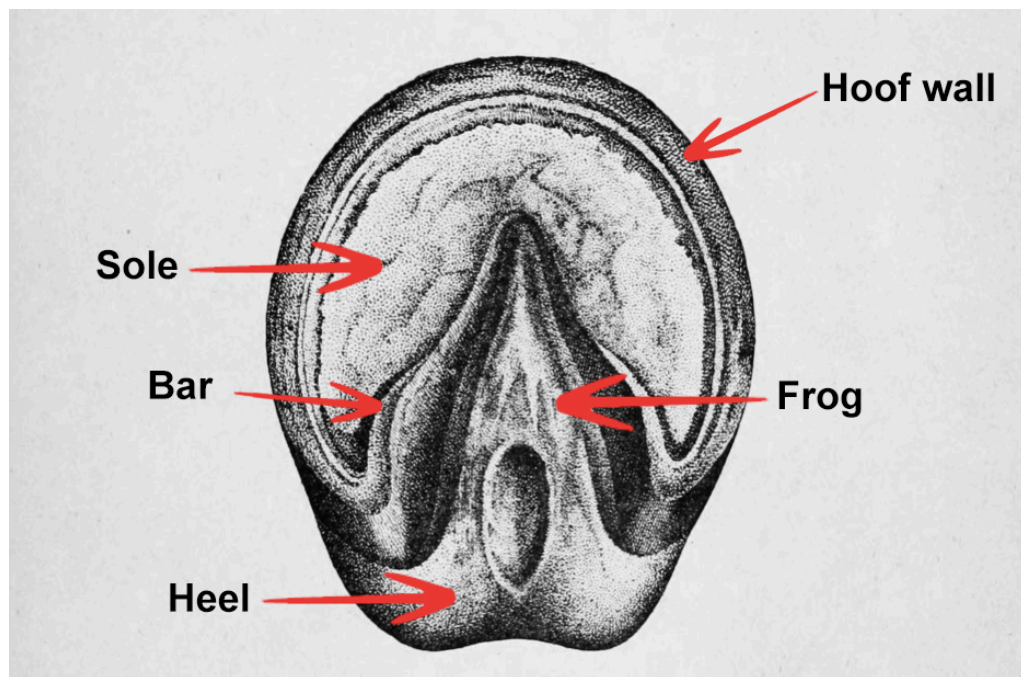


Fig. 1. An illustration showing the underside of a horse's hoof, adapted from the frontispiece in *The Art of Horse-Shoeing*, by William Hunting, 1895.

Coleman stressed the importance of the frog (see Fig. 1). Unlike the hoof wall and sole, which is made up of hard hoof-horn, the frog is more elastic, and covered with a tough and relatively insensitive skin, with a texture similar to rubber. Coleman stated that the frog was designed to act as an elastic cushion and anti-slip mechanism for the horse, and should therefore remain in contact with the ground. This, however, was rarely the case. Instead, shoeing smiths tended to cut the tough covering of the frog, and prevented it from touching the ground, which Coleman believed led to the hoof becoming contracted at the heels, which in turn resulted in lameness and disease. (A contracted hoof is narrow at the heels, and takes on an oval rather than a circular shape.) A healthy hoof where the frog remained in contact with the ground, he stated, would remain healthy. In Coleman's opinion, a farrier had to understand the purpose of the frog and the

way it functioned if he was to shoe a horse well. Even the best shoe could cause harm if the hoof had been badly prepared.¹¹ In Coleman's words,

‘We cannot suppose that the all-wise Creator would have made an organ, much exposed to injury, without making its structure adequate to its function... Shall we then doubt that the frog is made with the same degree of wisdom as other organs? Shall we not conclude that it was intended to receive pressure, since its convexity must make it liable to touch the ground at every step?’¹²

Such a statement, it must be noted, derided shoeing-smiths, who prevented the frog from functioning as Coleman believed it was intended to, for doubting the wisdom of God— no minor accusation in 1798.

However, Coleman's theory of the intended function of the frog differed noticeably from that of Charles Vial de St. Bel, one of the founders of the Veterinary College. Although St. Bel also believed that the frog served a purpose, he stated that ‘the frog bears only a slight part of the general burden [of weight-carrying]; it's [sic] chief use is to serve as a cushion or guard, to the tendon of the flexor muscle of the foot, to which it acts as both a sort of lever and defence...’¹³ By describing the frog as a shock absorber and anti-slip mechanism, Coleman was, therefore, identifying new functions of the frog.

Coleman advocated the use of two types of shoes, which were available at two forges operated by the Veterinary College and in use at the College itself (see Fig. 2). These shoes differed from the wide, convex horseshoes in regular use at the time and allowed the frog to come into contact with the ground as he recommended. Furthermore, he suggested that most horses could be shod with short shoes during the summer months, although wet weather dictated that horses would require longer shoes for the rest of the year to protect the hoof wall.

¹¹ Coleman, *Observations on the Structure, Oeconomy, and Diseases of the Foot of the Horse*, 31, 35 – 39, 51, 58, 72.

¹² *Ibid.*, 31.

¹³ Charles Vial de St. Bell, *The Sportsman, Farrier and Shoeing-Smith's New Guide*, trans. John Lawrence (London: B. Crosby, c. 1800), 39 – 40.

Racehorses, however, could generally be shod with short shoes year-round, because their hoof walls were stronger than heavy horses, Coleman explained.¹⁴ In 1800 and then again in 1808, Coleman registered three patents, firstly for a new type of shoe, and secondly for an ‘artificial frog’, which, when ‘applied to the natural frog of the horses’ feet’ would ‘effectually prevent contracted hoofs, thrushes, and canker’ — three types of hoof ailments which could result in lameness.¹⁵

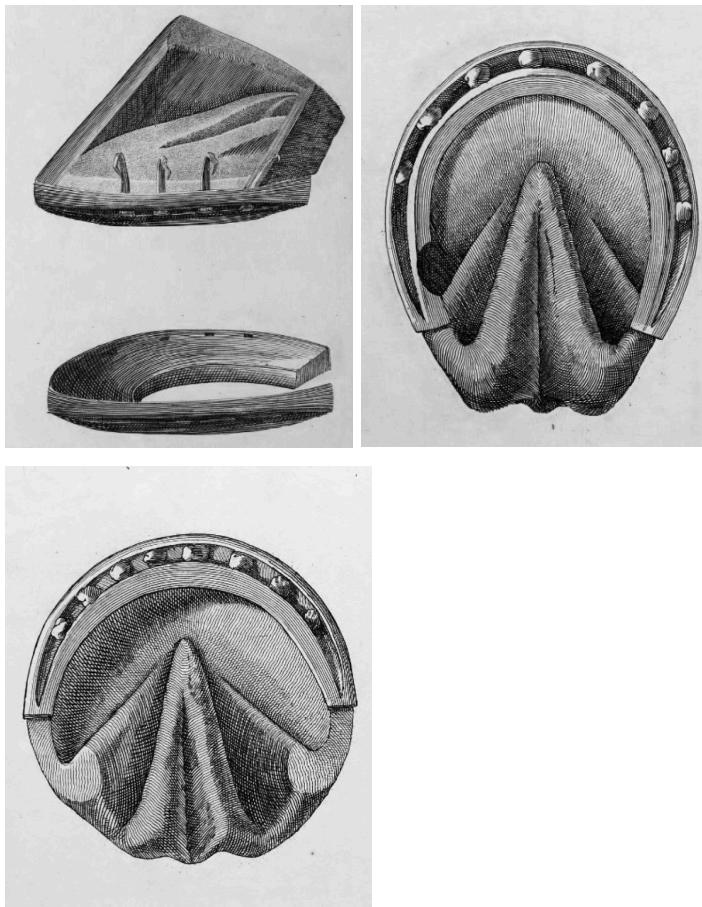


Fig. 2. The convex shoe in widespread use at the time, and two of the new types of shoes recommended by Coleman. The short shoe is pictured on the right.

¹⁴ Coleman, *Observations on the Structure, Oeconomy, and Diseases of the Foot of the Horse*, 60- 64, 121 – 128.

¹⁵ “New Patents Lately Enrolled”, *Monthly Magazine*, 9, no. 59 (June 1800): 486. “The New Patents”, *Universal Magazine*, 10, no. 59 (October 1808): 340. “New Patents Lately Enrolled”, *Monthly Magazine*, 26, no. 177 (November 1808): 360 – 361.

Bracy Clark was a further veterinary surgeon affiliated with the newly founded Royal Veterinary College who dedicated himself to the study of the horse's hoof and shoeing. Like Coleman, Clark was interested in what caused the horse's hoof to contract and become diseased, and the best ways to prevent this. In *A Series of Original Experiments on the Foot of the Living Horse*, Clark's first publication on the horse's hoof, he pointed out that, if Coleman had been correct about frog pressure being the root-cause of why hooves contracted and became diseased, then the problem would have been cured with Coleman's various patent inventions; but it had not. Instead, Clark reasoned that the very act of nailing a shoe on the hoof caused it to contract, because the nails and iron prevented the hoof from expanding on impact with the ground. This was further exacerbated by the fact that the shoe was nailed onto the foot when it bore no weight at all, and that horses were often shod before they had finished growing.¹⁶

In order to carry out his research, Clark used a five-year-old Thoroughbred-type horse which had been allowed to run loose in a field up until that time. He took a mould of this horse's hooves to demonstrate what the hoof of a grown horse that had never been shod looked like, which he said most people had never seen. He then had the horse shod for one year and took a further cast of the hoof. He observed that the hoof had changed and begun to contract, which he attributed to shoeing (see fig. 3). He then repeated the same experiment on another horse which he kept in a field, rather than at work and in a stable, which produced similar results.¹⁷

¹⁶ Bracy Clark, *A Series of Original Experiments on the Foot of the Living Horse* (London: Printed for the Author, 1809), 7 – 57, 68-70.

¹⁷ Bracy Clark, *Hippodonimia, or the True Structure, Laws and Economy of the Horse's Foot* (London: Printed for the Author, 1829), 7-12.



Fig. 3 Illustrations from Bracy Clark's *Podophthora* showing the same hoof before and after one year of being shod. The hoof on the left which has been shod of a year is narrower at the heel, and shows signs of becoming contracted.

Clark was a devout Quaker, and the expressions of concern for horses in his writing are unmistakable. In his introduction to *Hippodonomia*, his second publication, Clark asserted that improvements in shoeing horses were necessary because horses were 'ruined' as a result of poor shoeing, and pain was inflicted on them. A badly shod horse was referred to as 'the poor sufferer'; the changes to a horse's hooves brought about by inadequate shoeing, 'a cause of animal suffering which is beyond the utterance of language to express.'¹⁸ In a footnote, he expressed dismay at the way humans treated working horses: 'Surely we are not justified in taking these animals from their natural haunts to serve us, and then in return to ill-treat them...'¹⁹ He went so far as to suggest that, because humans benefitted from horses, people had no prerogative to mistreat them, and that some legal measures should be enacted to protect horses from abuse.²⁰ Clark's animal protection rhetoric, therefore, bears similarities with those of other humanitarians of the period.

¹⁸ Ibid., 12, 19.

¹⁹ Ibid., 39.

²⁰ Ibid., 46-47.

Like Coleman, Clark was also attempting to raise his own profile within the new veterinary profession by researching hoof anatomy and trying to improve farriery. He also developed a new patent horseshoe, the expansion shoe, which was supposed to enable the hoof to expand on impact as his research had shown that it did.²¹ Nevertheless, in the introduction to *Hippodonomia*, Clark expressed sadness that his research had been regarded with such hostility by the Veterinary College. Coleman, in particular, had been unsympathetic towards Clark's ideas; Clark, in return, was highly critical of Coleman.²² By 1828, the situation had deteriorated even further, as Clark used his journal *The Farrier and Naturalist* to discredit Coleman, whom he accused of duping students and clients into investing in his patent horse-shoe products, and pushing his 'ridiculous doctrine of frog pressure.'²³ As a friend of Coleman's described it in *The Lancet*, the situation had descended into a 'veterinary war.'²⁴

Although there was no love lost between Bracy Clark and Edward Coleman, their ambitions were markedly similar. They both occupied themselves with investigating hoof anatomy and observed that hoof contraction was somehow related to lameness and disease. Moreover, they both utilised the language of animal protection to describe hoof-care and shoeing, and identified that horse shoes could be patentable money-makers. Recall, however, that the Veterinary Schools in London and across Europe had grown out of the gradual splintering of the ancient craft of farriery into two branches of 'shoeing farriers' and 'medical

²¹ Bracy Clark, *A Series of Original Experiments on the Foot of the Living Horse* (London: Printed for the Author, 1809). Bracy Clark, *Stereoplea, or the Artificial Defence of the Horse's Hoof Considered*, (London: Printed for the Author, 1817). Bracy Clark, *A New Horse Shoe Which Expands to the Foot*, 2nd ed.' (London: Printed for the Author, 1827).

²² Bracy Clark, *Hippodonomia*, p. vi – vii, 15-16.

²³ "On the General Principle of Elasticity in the Feet of Animals, Particularly the Horse," *The Farrier and Naturalist*, 1, no. 1 (January, 1828): 13 – 16. "College Doctrines," *The Farrier and Naturalist*, 1, no. 6 (June, 1828): 242 -253. "Veterinary Profession," *The Farrier and Naturalist*, 1, no. 8 (August, 1828): 340 – 342.

²⁴ Anonymous reader letter, *The Lancet*, 10, no. 258 (9 August, 1828): 600 – 601.

farriers', and it becomes evident that Coleman, Clark, and other veterinary writers of the period were also trying to justify their own superiority over 'shoeing farriers' as equine healthcare (and hoof-care) professionals. Thus, these early publications by members of the London Veterinary College, while differing greatly in their opinions and findings, were unified by the common goals of improving the professional standing of veterinary surgeons (and their own status as individuals within this fledgling profession), and with reducing the incidence of hoof ailments and equine suffering. Crucially, Coleman and Clark's ideas also foreshadowed what would remain key issues throughout the 19th century for discussions about how to improve farriery.

Horseshoes as Animal Welfare

Although veterinary surgeons such as Clark and Coleman had developed their own patent horseshoes, by the mid 19th century, production methods had changed considerably, and horseshoes were increasingly an industrially manufactured product. Pre-fabricated horse-shoe bars, that is strips of stamped iron, often with a groove or ridge, had already been mass-produced in factories in the earlier half of the 19th century. These horse-shoe bars were then heated by the farrier and shaped into horseshoes. In the 1850s, factories began to experiment with fully machine-made horseshoes, which turned out a complete shoe that only needed to be adjusted by the farrier to fit the horse's hoof. One such machine was set up at the Chillington Ironworks in Wolverhampton, and could produce 60 horseshoes per minute.²⁵ In 1859, the same year that the machine was installed at the Chillington Ironworks, *The Engineer* described the construction and functions of a patent machine for making horseshoes which formed a horseshoe from a straight bar of iron and ejected the shoe upon completion. The following year, *The Engineer* featured a horseshoe machine developed and patented in America.²⁶ Shoeing-smiths were evidently not best pleased about this turn of

²⁵ "Machine for Making Horseshoes," *The Western Daily Press*, February 19, 1859, 4.

²⁶ "Newton's Machinery for Forging Horseshoes," *The Engineer*, April 22, 1859, 280.

"Cutler's Machine for Making Horseshoes," *The Engineer*, February 3, 1860, 76.

events, and, in 1861 at a meeting in Soho, the rift between shoeing-smiths and the increasing mechanisation of horseshoe production was palpable. Some shoeing-smiths were refusing to work with machine-made horseshoes, which they believed to be both useless and leading to a deskilling of their trade. The shoeing-smiths at the meeting resolved to uniformly refuse to work with machine-made shoes as from May 26th that year.²⁷

There are few figures which allow us to gauge the extent to which machine-made horseshoes became the norm by the late 19th century. Horseshoe manufacturing was clearly perceived as a profitable enterprise. To give an example, in 1881, the Horse-shoe Manufacturing Company opened in North Greenwich, making the so-called Seeley shoe. Within a few years, the factory was producing 2,000 tons of horseshoes a year, and the Seeley shoe had received endorsements from some of the nation's leading vets, and was the horseshoe of choice for the Metropolitan Tramways Company which owned thousands of horses.²⁸ In a question-and-answer session after a talk given at the Yorkshire Veterinary Medical Society, a veterinary surgeon working in the 13th Hussars stated that three quarters of the horses in the cavalry were shod with machine-made shoes by 1889.²⁹ Machine-made horseshoes were not only sold within Britain, but were shipped as far afield as South America and Australia.³⁰

Horseshoes were increasingly an invention, something to be developed and patented, and the huge number of patents registered on horseshoes is a testament to this burgeoning—if not always successful—trade. By the middle of the century, companies were producing an almost endless variety of horseshoes. An

²⁷ "Great Movement Amongst the Working Farriers," *Bell's Life in London*, May 19, 1861, 3.

²⁸ "The Turf," *The Country Gentleman: Sporting Gazette and Agricultural Journal*, November 26, 1881, 1264. 'Free-Lance', *Horses and Roads* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1881), 105.

²⁹ "Yorkshire Veterinary Medical Society," *The Veterinarian*, 62, no. 739 (1889): 507.

³⁰ "The Wolverhampton and District Hardware Trades," *Birmingham Daily Post*, April 12, 1882, 6.

annual list of patents granted to people in and around the city of Birmingham shows that in the category of ‘Horse-shoes, and heels and tips for boots and shoes’, the number steadily increased, from six in 1858, to an average of sixteen between the years 1867 to 1871.³¹ Between 1860 and 1876, as the equine population of Britain increased, the number of patent horseshoes and horseshoe-adjacent items (such as horseshoe pads and nails) also grew steadily.³² One source indicates that 200 patents for horseshoes had been registered during an 18 month period around 1886.³³ Not all patent horseshoes were successful in establishing themselves, however. As an article in *The Veterinarian* pointed out in 1889, ‘Systems of shoeing, like everything else, are subject to the great law of the ‘survival of the fittest’.³⁴ Patent horseshoes, therefore, had to meet the needs

³¹ “Patents, &c.,” *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 31 January 1859, 4. “Patents, &c.,” *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 23 January 1860, 4. “Analytical List of Letters Patent,” *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 26 January 1861, 2. “Condensed Analytical List of Patents,” *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 24 January 1863, 7. “Condensed Analytical List of Letters Patent Granted and Provisional Protections Applied for During the Year 1864,” *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 18 February 1865, 8. “Analytical List of Letters Patent for Inventions Sealed and Provisional Protections Allowed,” *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 23 February 1867, 7. “Analytical List of Letters Patent for Inventions Sealed and Provisional Protections Allowed,” *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 29 February 1868, 7. “Condensed Analytical List of Letters Patent,” *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 20 March 1869, 7. “Analytical List of Letters Patent for Inventions Sealed and Provisional Protections Allowed,” *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 2 April 1870, 7. “Arts and Manufactures: Analytical List...,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, 18 February, 1871, 7. “Arts and Manufactures: Analytical List,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, 16 March 1872, 6.

³² F. M. L. Thompson, ‘Nineteenth Century Horse-Sense,’ *Economic History Review*, 29, no. 1 (1976): 60- 81. *Patents for Inventions: Abridgements of Specifications Relating to Farriery*, Part I, A.D. 1719 – 1866 (London: The Commissioner of Patents' Sale Department, 1872). *Patents for Inventions: Abridgements of Specifications Relating to Farriery*, Part II, A.D. 1867 – 1876 (London: The Commissioner of Patents' Sale Department, 1880).

³³ C. T. Jeffery, *Revolution in Horse-Shoeing - How to prevent accidents and prolong the life of horses* (London: Arliss Andrews, 1886), 3.

³⁴ “A Nail-less Horseshoe,” *The Veterinarian*, 62, no. 735 (1889): 184.

of both equine and human users in order to be successful.

In Britain's cities teaming with horses, those Victorian persons whose humanitarian sensibilities had been heightened by animal protection rhetoric often witnessed events that were an affront to his or her concern for animals. After rain, frost or snow, horses could be seen struggling to keep their footing on the slippery roads. In London, Ludgate Hill, for example, was notorious for its sights of fallen horses that had failed to stay on their feet.³⁵ Many types of patent horse-shoes were designed with the explicit purpose of improving horses' grip on the roads and reducing the likelihood that a horse would fall, without the negative side-effects of calkins. Calks or Calkins, which raised part of the shoe (either by turning up the ends of the shoe, or attaching two bolts or additional pieces of iron), had been in widespread use for many decades, especially among horses that did heavy work in cities (Fig. 4). The purpose of calkins was to improve a horse's grip on the roads, but critics of calkins noted that they changed the angle of the hoof to the ground and prevented the frog from having contact with the ground. One writer observed that horses that wore calkins 'slip and stagger, and when at rest their bent knees and quivering limbs testify to the pain and weariness produced by the unnatural attitudes in which they are forced to stand.'³⁶ Critics of calkins encouraged observers to consider how horses that wore calkins looked and felt, and to try to draw parallels between human and equine experiences.³⁷ '...how would any man like to have to work or walk all day over hard ground in cricket shoes and spikes? How would his legs and feet feel?' asked one commentator.³⁸

³⁵ 'Free-Lance', *Horses and Roads*, 126. Ludgate Hill also features in Sewell's *Black Beauty* as the location where the fictional horse falls over while pulling a cart.

³⁶ "The 'Goodenough' Method of Shoeing Horses," *The Times*, December 10, 1868, 5.

³⁷ "Shoeing Horses in London," *The Times*, October 24, 1861, 11.

³⁸ "The Charlier Shoe," *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, February 10, 1872, 6.

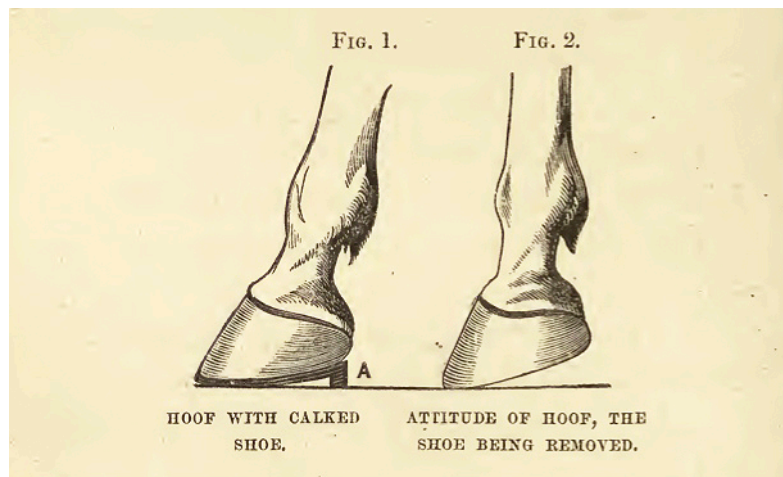


Fig. 4. A horseshoe with calkins.

New patent horseshoes were designed to solve many of the problems which affected the working horse such as slipping, contracted feet, lameness, and navicular disease.³⁹ Descriptions of new horseshoes included T. H. Harris's horseshoe which was strapped onto the hoof instead of using nails (patented in 1857). Its purpose was 'remedying these complaints, which not only causes great pain to the animals so affected, but greatly deteriorates their power or sureness of foot either for riding or draught purposes.'⁴⁰ Other patent horseshoes described included a hinged shoe fastened without nails, rubber covered horseshoes, rubber pads for use with horse shoes, and shoes with removable calkins.⁴¹

Rubber gradually became a popular material for use in and around horseshoes for urban working horses. Rubber-covered horseshoes were designed to improve grip on the roads, removed the need for calkins, and reduced concussion. There were also rubber inserts and pads which served a similar purpose. The big selling point for these products were that they mimicked the gripping-capabilities of the

³⁹ Navicular disease affects the navicular bone in the horse's hoof and causes lameness.

⁴⁰ "T. H. Harris's Improvements in Horse Shoes," *The Engineer*, December 4, 1857, 416.

⁴¹ "Abstracts of Specifications," *The Engineer*, November 4, 1881, 342. "Abstracts of Specifications," *The Engineer*, June 2, 1882, 409. "Abstracts of Specifications," *The Engineer*, September 1, 1882, 170. Abstracts of Specifications, *The Engineer*, March 30, 1883, 256.

frog of the hoof— an idea that had first been put forward by Coleman at the turn of the century (Fig. 5).⁴² Thomas Taylor’s Horse-shoe pad, developed by a veterinarian, promised to be an ‘artificial frog’, which also reduced concussion and improved grip.⁴³ There must have been considerable interest in these many horseshoe innovations, because the Animals’ Institute in London held an exhibition devoted solely to horseshoes that showcased more than one thousand specimens of horseshoes throughout history and new inventions. The exhibition also offered awards for the best new horseshoes in a variety of categories such as ‘draught horse shoes’ and ‘racing plates.’⁴⁴



Fig. 5. Early 20th century patent rubber-covered horseshoes and Sheather’s Pneumatic Horseshoe Pad, Queens Veterinary School Hospital, Cambridge University.

These horseshoes and rubber pads were also advertised in newspapers and

⁴² See for example: Advertisement for the Whaleite Flexible Horseshoe Company, *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 24 August, 1889, 26. Advertisement for The Ajax Pneumatic Horseshoe Pad, *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 31 July 1897, 41.

⁴³ Thomas Taylor’s Horse-Shoe Pad, *The Veterinarian* (1889), Vol. 62, No. 740, p. 544-545.

⁴⁴ “Correspondence,” *The Sporting Times*, February 8, 1890, 6. “Ancient and Modern Horseshoes,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, 6 March, 1890, 8. “The Horse-Shoe Exhibition,” *The Graphic*, March 15, 1890, 314.

periodicals, and some manufacturers had advertorial booklets printed. Adverts for patent horseshoes and horseshoe pads could be found in a variety of publications, from regional newspapers to the sporting press. These adverts tended to highlight the function of the shoe, and were sometimes accompanied by an illustration of the product. Manufacturers heralded their shoes as being ‘rational’, ‘natural’ or ‘scientific.’ Hartmann’s Horseshoe Pads would ‘enable the horse to tread as if unshod... preventing slipping on asphalt or frozen roads.’⁴⁵ The Ajax Pneumatic Horseshoe Pad would reduce concussion and slipping, and ‘give the horse confidence and security, sparing him ineffective muscular exertion.’⁴⁶ The Martin Horseshoe was ‘non-slipping’, and would provide ‘a horse confidence and greater freedom of action and a firm grip on the road.’ It was in use at the Royal Mews at the time.⁴⁷

Booklets published to advertise and inform readers about a specific patent horseshoe told people the best way to have their horse shod, the benefits of the patent shoe, and how to fit it. Much of the literature devoted to these patent horse shoes carried clear messages about how these new shoes would improve horse’s lives. A booklet for the Goodenough Shoe, titled *No Frog, No Foot*, criticised shoeing smiths for paring away the frog, which the author described as ‘a cruel mutilation’. He expressed hope that, ‘soon a system of shoeing wherein the frog and sole are allowed to carry out their proper functions will be generally practiced, and that one may soon be able to pass through the streets of London and other large cities and see horses at their work, feeling that its performance does not cost them any agony or pain.’⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Advert for Hartmann’s Patent Horseshoe Pads, *The Sporting Gazette*, February 17, 1877, 166.

⁴⁶ Advert for The Ajax Pneumatic Horseshoe Pad, *Horse and Hound: A Journal of Sport and Agriculture*, July 18, 1896, 462.

⁴⁷ Advert for The Martin Horseshoe, *The Country Gentleman: Sporting Gazette, Agricultural Journal*, May 6, 1899, 573.

⁴⁸ Edward Cottam, *No Frog No Foot - Observations on the Goodenough System of Shoeing Horses with Sound or Defective Feet* (London: Darling & Sons, 1869), 17.

In another booklet for the Jeffrey Patent India Rubber Banded Horse-Shoe, the author lamented that ‘it is extremely painful to witness the poor animals slipping and sliding’. Later, he suggested that horses’ lives were cut short through poor shoeing.

‘Why, at this age, should we be compelled to part with our favourite horse, whose neigh of welcome we so thoroughly enjoyed when visiting his stable, and whose eye still retains its brightness and intelligence? We may indeed ask why. But the reason is not far to seek. It is because he has been so shod that he has gone over at the knees, and trembles so much that he appears likely to fall, seeming incapable of bearing his own weight.’⁴⁹

It is worth stressing that this heartfelt plea, which appeals to the human sensibilities of sight and animal emotions, was not published by any animal welfare organisation of the period; it is explicitly about a new type of horseshoe. Patent horseshoe literature appealed to people’s sensibilities, asking them to observe the discomfort of the horse, to consider what might they might do to improve and extend horses’ lives— and used this as a sales tactic. This was animal protection that could be purchased.

As all manner of patent horseshoes flooded the market, various horseshoe manufacturers also began to produce specialist shoes for racehorses. Because racehorses did not tend to be exercised on the roads, the effects of calkins, or grip during a frost were of no concern; instead, the emphasis was on weight and durability to improve racing performance, and withstand galloping exercise. The Patent Tip and Horse Shoe Company in Wolverhampton manufactured ‘steel racing shoes... which last double the time of iron shoes and never break.’⁵⁰

⁴⁹ C. T. Jeffery, *Revolution in Horse-Shoeing - How to prevent accidents and prolong the life of horses* (London: Arliss Andrews, 1886), 3-4. William Fearnley, *Lectures on the Examination of Horses as to Soundness* (London: Balliere, Tindall and Cox, 1878), 49.

⁵⁰ Advertisement for The Patent Tip and Horse Shoe Company, *Lloyd's List*, May 9, 1878, 2.

Horseshoe maker Gray's also manufactured 'patent Grooved Racing Plates' alongside their wider assortment of horseshoes, which they advertised in the sporting press during the late 1860s and early 70s.⁵¹ From today's perspective, easily the most significant experimental horseshoe usage in racing went completely under the radar, however; in the United States, the American racehorse owner Pierre Lorillard, who later brought his horses to England, asked Tiffany & Company to produce aluminium shoes for some of his racehorses during the 1880s—likely the first use of aluminium shoes in racing, which is commonplace today. Somewhat surprisingly, in his memoir he deemed the experiment a failure.⁵²

One of the most revolutionary new forms of horseshoe was the Charlier shoe (fig. 6), named after the French veterinary surgeon Pierre Charlier who invented it in 1865. It caused a veritable storm upon its introduction to Britain, and quickly won advocates among horse-owners, anti-cruelty campaigners and vets. James McCall of the Glasgow Veterinary School called it 'more in keeping with the economy of the animal's feet than any other at the present time in use.'⁵³ Mr Gillon, the veterinary surgeon for the Highland and Agricultural Society said, 'The simplicity, economy, and humanity of the system cannot fail to recommend it to all who, with unprejudiced minds and with a sincere desire to befriend our noble, useful coadjutor, the horse, will approach the subject, examine it, and give it a fair trial.'⁵⁴ 'Neither calkin nor toe piece are required; the frog is a natural 'calkin', a kind of wedge on the slippery ground, sustaining the tendons, rather than straining them,' wrote another.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Advertisement for Gray's Patent Horse Shoes, *Bell's Life in London*, December 25, 1869, 1. Advertisement for Gray's Patent Horse Shoes, *Bell's Life in London*, February 26, 1870, 2.

⁵² W.S. Vosburgh, *Cherry and Black: The Career of Mr. Pierre Lorillard on the Turf* (Printed for Pierre Lorillard, 1916), 125.

⁵³ "The Charlier System of Horse-Shoeing," *Falkirk Herald*, 24 September, 1870, 2.

⁵⁴ "Highland and Agricultural Society," *Farmer's Gazette and Journal of Practical Horticulture*, 19 March, 1870, 117.

⁵⁵ "Cruelty to the Horse in Shoeing," *Aberdeen Journal*, 24 January, 1872, 7.

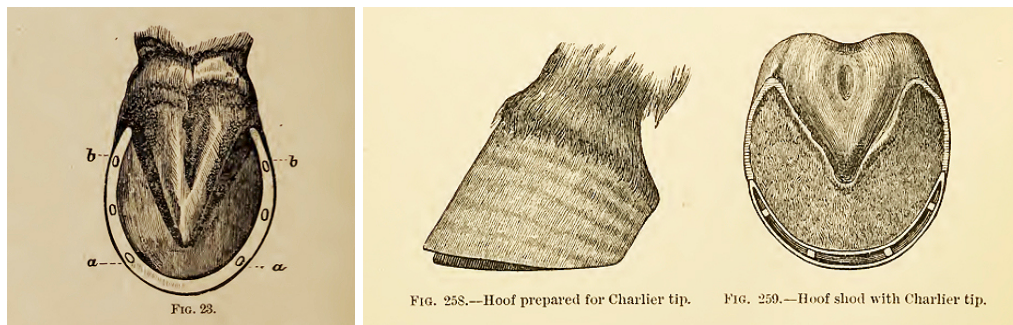


Fig 6. Illustrations showing the Charlier shoe & Charlier tip. Note how the shoe is embedded into the hoof wall, rather than nailed upon it.

To many observers, the Charlier shoe appeared to be the perfect solution to the horse's many woes. Unlike most other horseshoes at the time, the Charlier shoe was thin and light, and, in contrast with other shoes which were nailed onto the hoof, the Charlier shoe was embedded into the wall of the hoof before being nailed on, which enabled the frog to make full contact with the ground, thereby removing the need for calkins or rubber alternatives.⁵⁶ Its advocates especially admired that the shoe allowed 'nature' to do its job. 'The Charlier,' wrote one proponent in a reader letter to *The Country Gentleman*, 'allows the frog—Nature's pad—to touch the ground, and act as Nature intended it should, and Nature beats the blacksmith.'⁵⁷ George Fleming, an influential veterinary surgeon, and future president of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, was a great proponent of the Charlier system, praising the shoe's lightness, horses' sure-footedness, and its apparent ability to turn lame horses into sound ones, although he did observe that the correct fitting of the shoe could be problematic.⁵⁸ An further veterinary surgeon corroborated Fleming's assertion that previously unsound horses became sound when shod with the Charlier

⁵⁶ "On Shoeing Horses," *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, January 20, 1872, 6.

⁵⁷ E. Tattersall, "A Plea for Our Horses," *The Country Gentleman: Sporting Gazette and Agricultural Journal*, January 28, 1881, 125.

⁵⁸ George Fleming, *Horse Shoes and Horse Shoeing: Their Origin, History, Uses, and Abuses* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1869), 574- 596, 675 – 678.

shoe— 24 years after Fleming initially praised the shoe.⁵⁹

The racehorse owner Hugh Lowther, 8th Earl of Lonsdale, was evidently interested in the Charlier shoe and the possibility of using it on his own horses.⁶⁰ He sent his farrier to visit gun-maker Westley Richards, who had further developed the Charlier shoe into the Charlier tip, which Richards had been using on his hunters since 1866. This modified version of the shoe only covered the very tip of the horse's hoof.⁶¹ George Flemming, was so impressed with the hooves he saw when he visited Richards in 1873, that he remarked, 'They were exactly like hoofs which had never been shod: and if I were desirous of obtaining drawings of what might be termed "perfect hoofs" I could not select better models than these, they being in the soundest condition, and in excellent proportion and outline. Physiologically, they were as perfect.'⁶² Not everyone, however, was convinced by the Charlier system. William Douglas, a former Private in the 10th Hussars, argued that that Charlier shoe was liable to twist and break, and that it was difficult to find shoeing-smiths who were careful and patient enough to fit the shoe correctly. His own trial of the Charlier shoe on troop horses had ended in failure.⁶³

It is difficult to determine exactly how widespread the use of the Charlier shoe and its popular variation, the Charlier Tip, was in Britain. It wasn't merely individuals using these shoes on their horses; the Manchester Carriage Company

⁵⁹ "Midland Counties Veterinary Medical Association," *The Veterinarian*, 66, no. 782 (1893): 133.

⁶⁰ Unfortunately, it is impossible to ascertain from the correspondence whether the Earl of Lonsdale was interested in the Charlier shoe for his racehorses, hunters, or driving horses.

⁶¹ Letter from Westley Richards to Lord Lonsdale and photograph depicting a hoof shod with the Charlier shoe, December 14, 1893, D/Lons/L9/2/49, Carlisle Record Office.

⁶² Report from George Fleming on Westley Richards' Method of Shoeing Horses, March 28, 1873, D/Lons/L9/2/49, Carlisle Record Office.

⁶³ William Douglas, *Horse-Shoeing As It Is and As It Should Be* (London: John Murray, 1873), 125-130.

had 3,000 of its 4,000 horses shod under the Charlier system, as did the Birmingham Fire Brigade.⁶⁴ Edmund Tattersall (of the famous Tattersalls horse auctioneers) advocated for its adoption within horse-racing circles because it would have removed the need for specialist racing plates.⁶⁵ The countless newspaper and periodical articles praising the shoe, and the fact that it was included in almost every book on horseshoeing published after 1865 until well into the beginning of the 20th century further indicate that it had a fervent following, and that a horse shod with a Charlier shoe would not have been an uncommon sight in the second half of the 19th century. It was, to many, the ideal solution to a long-standing problem— a horseshoe that, provided adequate grip and simultaneously respected the natural function of the horse's hoof. As this examination of the wide variety of horseshoes produced during the 19th century shows, humanitarian concern for horses, a widespread belief in the importance of 'nature' being allowed to function as intended, and increased efficiency in horseshoe production were entwined.

The ongoing quest to improve farriery

In 1840, Richard Darvill's racehorse training manual devoted two chapters specifically to the care of the horse's feet. He asserted that racehorses were required to do work and kept in conditions which were more detrimental to horse's hooves than any other working horse, and it was the joint responsibility of the trainer and the shoeing-smith to see that their hooves were well looked after to ensure the horses' soundness. He recommended that trainers paid close attention to their horses' feet and to the work done by shoeing smiths. Shoeing-smiths, he noted, would come to the training stable to shoe the horses on site. They would often bring ill-fitting shoes with them, which could lead to lameness,

⁶⁴ T. D. Broad, "Report on the Competition for the Horse-Shoeing Prizes at Exeter, with Observations on the General Treatment of Diseases of the Horse's Foot," *The Veterinarian*, 63, no. 749 (1890): 296.

⁶⁵ E. Tattersall, "A Plea for Our Horses," *The Country Gentleman: Sporting Gazette and Agricultural Journal*, January 29, 1881, 125.

and he advised that trainers instructed shoeing-smiths to measure horses' feet the day before, so that they would bring well-fitting shoes with them instead. The risk was equally great at the racecourse itself, where trainers had little choice over who was going to plate their horse (that is, attach a special lightweight shoe) before the race.⁶⁶ Darvill's racing-specific instructions on hoof-care and the work of shoeing-smiths reflected both a need for the trainer to supervise the work of the shoeing-smith to ensure the soundness of his horses, and doubt over the competency of shoeing-smiths. This, of course, was nothing new; Darvill, who trained as a veterinary surgeon, was merely following the anti-farrier rhetoric already adopted by Coleman, Clark and others.

The anti-farrier rhetoric among veterinary surgeons transcended generations. Writing in 1869, the influential veterinary surgeon George Fleming observed, 'The art of shoeing is simply traditional... [The farrier] is but a labourer or workman pursuing a useful but unscientific occupation.' He regarded this as a primary cause for the lack of progress in preventing and curing hoof ailments.⁶⁷ Fleming criticised farriers' 'excessive mutilation of the hoof', and declared that a lot that passed for farriery was 'evil'.⁶⁸ Fleming's criticisms went significantly further than his veterinary predecessors, however; he asked his readers to look at urban horses, and to note how many were worse for wear in spite of their young years and how much of that was due to bad shoeing.⁶⁹ He wrote:

'It is one of the most sacred duties devolving upon us to see that, while we exact services from this noble creature... we do our utmost to remove from its path any pain or discomfort which this exaction may entail. I can conceive of no greater torture man can inflict on this most willing servant, that that induced by ignorance or neglect in the application of

⁶⁶ Richard Darvill, *A Treatise on the Care, Treatment, and Training of the English Race Horse in a Series of Rough Notes*, Vol 1, (London: James Ridgeway, 1840), 65-67, 290-327.

⁶⁷ George Fleming, *Horse-Shoes and Horse Shoeing* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1869), 628.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 631-632.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 644.

shoes to its feet.’

Just as horseshoe manufacturers utilised animal protection as a way to sell shoes, veterinary surgeons such as Fleming relied on this same discourse to sell their services by accentuating their empathy for horses, demonstrating their scientific credentials, and deriding the work of farriers. Crucially, with no farriers contributing to the discussion in print, the anti-farrier rhetoric disseminated by veterinary surgeons and other interested parties defined the depiction of farriery during this period.⁷⁰

Yet, as has already been established, during the 19th century farriers were very important members of Britain’s workforce; without them, the equine workforce had little hope of completing their tasks. Neither supposedly mediocre training nor bad reputation seemed to have a negative impact on the number of farriers. In 1841, 57 shoeing forges were listed in the London trade directory. By 1891, that number had increased to 188.⁷¹ With ever more horses to shoe, farriers were in serious demand.⁷² Some established corporations that operated multiple shoeing forges, such as the Metropolitan Horse Shoeing Company, which had eight

⁷⁰ It is quite telling that the most positive recommendations for improvement were written by William Douglas, a former Private in the 10th Hussars, who had no vested interest in the veterinary profession. He advocated for improving farriers’ education with lectures on equine anatomy and disease, and recommended disbanding the payment system which rewarded farriers for shoeing quickly, instead of for the quality of their work. See: William Douglas, *Horse Shoeing As It Is and As It Should Be* (London: John Murray, 1873).

⁷¹ *The Post Office London Trades’ Directory for 1841* (London: Kelly & Co, 1841), 708. *The Post Office London Trades’ Directory for 1891* (London: Kelly & Co, 1891), 1747 – 1748.

⁷² Census records make it impossible to gauge the increase in the number of farriers and shoeing smiths working, because veterinary surgeons and farriers were classed together until 1881. Then, as from 1891, farriers were classified together with blacksmiths. The drop between 1881 and 1891 by more than 4,300 persons suggests that there may have been upward of 4,000 farriers working in England and Wales during that time period. See: *Occupations of the People (England and Wales) Enumerated in 1871, 1881, and 1891*, 1895, (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office), 6.

premises across London.⁷³ Moreover, despite vocal criticisms of farriers by veterinary surgeons, numerous veterinary surgeons ran shoeing forges out of their premises, and endorsed specific types of horse-shoes. Such a business model allowed veterinary practices to attract clients, by offering a one-stop-shop for shoeing and equine medical care. It also offered clients, who might have been alarmed by the anti-farrier rhetoric of the period, the assurance that shoeing would be supervised by a learned veterinary surgeon.⁷⁴

The real beginnings of a pro-active educational approach towards improving the standard of farriery in Britain began in the 1870s with introduction of shoeing competitions at agricultural shows, which considered both the workmanship of the shoe and how the horse's hoof was trimmed, and demonstrated the importance of effective horseshoeing and farriery for horses providing draft power on farms as well.⁷⁵ In 1871, at the Bath and West of England Society show, twenty shoeing-smiths took part in the competition.⁷⁶ The rules of the competition stipulated that 'the soles and frogs were not to be cut with knives, nor yet were the soles to be rasped outside,' thereby mirroring the

⁷³ *The Post Office London Trades' Directory for 1891* (London: Kelly & Co, 1891), 1748.

⁷⁴ "The Humane Horse Shoe," *The Trowbridge and North Wilts Advertiser*, 6 March, 1869, 2. "Veterinary & Shoeing Forge," *Surrey Comet*, 3 April, 1875, 2. Advertisement for George Holtham, *Gloucester Journal*, 4 October, 1879, 1. Advertisement for George Rugg, *West London Observer*, 21 November, 1885, 2. "The Rational Horse Shoe," *Horse and Hound*, 24 May, 1890, 322. "Taylor's Horse Shoe Pad," *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 6 October, 1894, 176. John Gamgee, "On Shoeing Horses," *London Standard*, 15 October, 1867, 2. See also: Abigail Woods and Stephen Matthews, "'Little, if at all, Removed from the Illiterate Farrier or Cow-leech': The English Veterinary Surgeon, c.1860–1885, and the Campaign for Veterinary Reform," *Medical History*, 54, no. 1 (2010): 41.

⁷⁵ "Current Topics," *The Ipswich Journal*, 7 March, 1871, 2.

⁷⁶ "Bath and West of England Society and Southern Counties Association," *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 2 June 1871, 6. "Bath and West of England Society and Southern Counties Association," *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 6 June 1872, 1.

recommendations of veterinary surgeon of the period.⁷⁷ The competition at the Yorkshire Agricultural Show in 1874 offered two classes, one for the best shoeing of a draught horse, the other for young blacksmiths under the age of twenty, who demonstrated the best work forging fore and hind-shoes for draught horses. £5 was awarded to the winner of each class and £3 and £2 to second and third place respectively.⁷⁸ Shoeing competitions had clear goals to both honour the best shoeing-smiths, but also to improve the work performed by them, as the rules for how to prepare the hoof for the shoe indisputably illustrate. In 1877, The Worshipful Company of Farriers introduced a technical education prize for the best essay on the care of the harness horse which was co-judged by members of the Council of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and the court of the Worshipful Company of Farriers, although this does not appear to have been a hoof-specific essay.⁷⁹ These efforts to improve farriery through the introduction of competitions did not, however, put to rest the idea that many farriers were incompetent. In 1881, one critic voiced that, ‘horses come and horses go, and, as far as outward signs are concerned, very little damage is done. There are thousands of lame horses about, however, that could give reasons for these maladies if they could only speak, and a fair share could be traced to the village forge.’⁸⁰

After a failed initial proposal to establish an institute of horse shoeing, the Worshipful Company of Farriers, together with the Royal Agricultural Society and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, moved in 1890 to implement a registration scheme for farriers. The goal of this new registration scheme was to introduce examinations for farriers which, it was hoped, would improve the education of shoeing smiths (which had thus far consisted of an unregulated

⁷⁷ “Bath and West of England Society and Southern Counties Association,” *Taunton Courier*, 12 June, 1872, 3.

⁷⁸ “The Yorkshire Agricultural Show at Sheffield,” *York Herald*, 6 August, 1874, 6.

⁷⁹ “Technical Education Prizes Offered by the Worshipful Company of Farriers of London,” *The Veterinarian*, 50, no. 592 (1877): 227.

⁸⁰ “Blacksmiths and Shoeing,” *Bell’s Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, July 30, 1881, 6.

apprenticeship in a shoeing forge), and reduce cruelty toward horses.⁸¹ This was probably not the whole story, however. Following the passing of the Veterinary Surgeons Act (1881) some restrictions were placed on who could call themselves a veterinary surgeon, although, as Woods and Matthews have shown, the Act did not necessarily require prior completion of a course of study.⁸² An article in *The Veterinarian* indicated that the registration scheme was also a political move to distinguish between veterinary surgeons and farriers, although its author doubted the registration schemes efficacy: ‘Instead of the scheme eventually presenting a very strong line of demarcation between the veterinary surgeon and horse-shoer, I am of the opinion that it will act in the opposite way,’ he wrote. The problem was partly in the terminology; the wider public continued to use the term ‘farrier’ interchangeably to encompass horse doctors and horse shoers, as had been the case for centuries. This evidently infuriated some members of the veterinary profession, who sought to differentiate themselves from those who shod horse. As ‘Loyalist’ wrote in the *Veterinary Journal*, ‘what the local members of the [veterinary] profession should do, is to make the public understand that a veterinary surgeon is neither a farrier nor a horse-shoer, and that the word ‘farrier’ is really obsolete.’⁸³

In June that year, a meeting attended by numerous officials was held at Mansion House to discuss the proposed registration scheme. The acting Master of the Worshipful Company of Farriers expressed his support for a scheme to improve ‘the technical instruction and systematic registration of farriers,’ while others expressed the importance of the proposed scheme to horse welfare. The MP Burdett-Coutts remarked that ‘ignorant and unskilful farriery’ was the primary cause why horses were ‘rendered useless’. The Lord Mayor stated that, aside from charity work, he could not think of anything that would appeal more to

⁸¹ “The Royal Agricultural Society,” *London Evening Standard*, 6 March, 1890, 3.

“Proposed Registration of Farriers,” *Gloucester Citizen*, 20 May, 1890, 3.

⁸² Abigail Woods and Stephen Matthews, ““Little, if at all, Removed from the Illiterate Farrier or Cow- leech,”” 29 – 54.

⁸³ ‘Loyalist,’ “Veterinary Surgeons & Horse-Shoers,” *The Veterinary Journal*, 30 (1890): 467.

‘kind-hearted persons’ than the improvement of farriery. The new farriers registration scheme was unanimously approved.⁸⁴

The registration committee consisted of members of the Worshipful Company of Farriers, The Royal Veterinary College and the Royal Agricultural Society. Under the new registration scheme, farriers who had passed an examination would be able to put ‘RSS’ (Registered Shoeing Smith) after their name. The move was somewhat tactical on behalf of veterinarians, in that it removed the word ‘farrier’ from the shoeing-smiths’ title. Furthermore, the examiners weren’t established farriers known for the skill of their work, but long-time farrier critic George Fleming, J. D. Barford and Professor Pritchard— all three veterinary surgeons. The scheme was not compulsory, however, so anyone who had apprenticed as a shoeing smith could continue to practice.⁸⁵ While the scheme registered thousands of shoeing smiths in its first few years of existence, a number of vets criticized the fact that only ‘9 men in every thousand’ had completed a practical exam. By 1895, the scheme was in disrepair, having cost thousands of Pounds of various societies’ money, and done little to improve the education of farriers.⁸⁶

Simultaneously, however, a rather more successful education scheme was being established at a regional level. A mobile farrier school, funded by Somerset County Council, was set up by the Bath & West & Southern Counties Society in

⁸⁴ “Registration of Farriers,” *London Standard*, 3 June, 1890, 3. “National Registration of Farriers,” *The Times*, 3 June, 1890, 11. “The Registration of Farriers,” *The Veterinarian*, 63, no. 751 (1890): 457 – 459.

⁸⁵ “National Registration Scheme of Farriers or Shoeing-Smiths,” *The Veterinarian*, 64, no. 768 (1891): 850-851. “Worshipful Company of Farriers,” *Yorkshire Gazette*, 7 November, 1891, 6. “Examination of Farriers of Shoeing Smiths,” *Sussex Agricultural Express*, 4 March, 1892, 3.

⁸⁶ “Worshipful Farriery,” *The Veterinarian*, 67, no. 795 (1894): 194-196. Jno. A. W. Dollar, “A Moribund Scheme,” *The Veterinarian*, 68, no. 816 (1895): 839- 846. H. G. Rogers, “Scheme for Improving Working Farriers,” *The Veterinarian*, 69, no. 817 (1895) 81 – 83.

1895 to travel around Somerset. The society asked William Blackhall to run the school for them. Unlike the registration scheme, which used veterinary surgeons as examiners, Blackall was a respected farrier in the region who also travelled to Newmarket on occasion at the request of veterinary surgeons there to examine horses with reoccurring lameness. Blackall and his mobile school travelled from village to village, announcing its impending arrival via a leaflet with a registration form. The school typically spent two weeks in one place before moving on. At any one time, Blackall had between three to ten shoeing-smiths attending. His students varied in age, from late teens to mid-forties. The school provided instruction on how trim hooves correctly, and to make and fit a variety of horseshoes. Rather than drawing a strict demarcating line between farriers and veterinary surgeons, Blackall's school encouraged shared learning. G H Elder, a veterinary surgeon, gave lectures on equine anatomy and a variety of other subjects related to farriery. In a report from 1901, the Society said that a total of 434 pupils had attended the school since it was set up six years prior.⁸⁷ It was by all accounts a success, and other counties adopted a similar scheme.

As can be seen, widespread anti-farrier rhetoric by veterinary surgeons and other farriery reform advocates, which equated farriers and their craft with poor education and oftentimes animal cruelty, resulted in a number of measures to improve the standards of farriery during the 19th century. While formal bodies implemented shoeing competitions, a farriers registration scheme, and a mobile farrier school, another rather different underground movement had begun voicing its ideas of how equine hoof-care might be improved. They were a comparatively small group of people, but they were fiercely dedicated, well organised, and they definitely knew how to cause a stir.

⁸⁷ Letter to W. Blackhall from S. H. Elden, January 1895. D/EX/1485/1/51. Untitled dated letter written by William Blackhall, D/EX/1485/1/21/2. Register of Pupils at Farriery School, D/EX/1485/1/10. Farriery School information sheet, Thomas F. Plowman, D/EX/1485/1/15/1. *Report of the Agricultural Education Committee*, 1901, D/EX/1485/1/13/3. All Berkshire Record Office.

Barefoot Evangelists

On June 12th, 1878, a Mr F A Evans wrote a letter to *The Times* newspaper. Evans despaired at London's roads, which caused horses to slip and stumble, especially after rain or a frost. He pleaded with the RSPCA to begin campaigning for improved road surfaces which would not cause horses such harm.⁸⁸ As discussed earlier in the chapter, Mr Evans' letter raised quite a common complaint at the time over the hazardous road surfaces and their effects on horses. In response to his letter, a one reader's reply was published, telling him to put Charlier shoes on his horses to improve their grip, but another letter went much further.⁸⁹ It was this letter that would put in motion a rather different campaign relating to hoof-care and farriery, and like others before it, it was marked by its passionate pleas to consider the welfare of the horse.

On June 15th, two days later, George Ransom picked up his pen. Ransom didn't merely suggest Mr Evans put Charlier shoes on his horse; he said he had travelled all over the world, and seen horses do all manner of work on a variety of surfaces without any shoes on at all, and, since 1852, he had only ridden or driven unshod horses. He even recommended a way for Mr Evans to gradually acclimatise his horses' hooves to going unshod. 'I do not expect that these statements will be favourably received by a people so energetically conservative as the English,' he wrote, '... But, as a quarter of a century's practice, forced in the beginning, has so thoroughly converted me, it is just possible that one or two may make the experiment, especially those who have colts to break in that have never been shod.'⁹⁰ This opinion had, to some extent, already been expressed by Bracy Clark at the turn of the century. Clark had remarked that pleasure horses could probably perform the work required of them entirely without shoes and had experimented himself with riding horses unshod, although Clark believed that horses that had been shod before could not be worked afterwards without

⁸⁸ F. A. Evans, "Asphalte Pavement," *The Times*, 12 June, 1878, 4.

⁸⁹ H. W. Stephens, "Asphalte Pavement," *The Times*, June 13, 1878, 11.

⁹⁰ George Ransom, "Horse Shoes," *The Times*, June 22, 1878, 14.

shoes.⁹¹ Perhaps unsurprisingly when one considers the vibrant debates about horseshoes and farriery in the decades previously, Evans' reader letter incited heated discussion and the debate refused to stop.

In 1880, George Ransom published *Horses & Roads* under the nom-de-plume of 'Free-Lance'.⁹² Within a year, his book had already been reprinted twice, suggesting that it found a considerable audience.⁹³ Ransom advocated the use of the Charlier tip as the best shoe available, but he encouraged his readers to aim to dispense with shoes altogether, and to see the Charlier tip as a transitional mechanism. He asserted that, from a young age he had learned that, 'Nature made everything complete, and nothing in vain. Hence he [Ransom] inferred that the horse's body was never made stronger than his legs and feet, and that these, when understood, will be found to be 'fearfully and wonderfully made'...' ⁹⁴ Later he stated, 'The Almighty defies 'the puny intellect of man' to produce a road of any kind that can harm the foot which He has designed with his omniscience and omnipotence to grapple with everything that can possibly spring up on the surface of the earth.'⁹⁵ Ransom was arguing that the horse was a perfect creation by God, and that, by nailing shoes onto their feet, man was doubting God. Ransom was evangelical in his mission to persuade horse owners to work their horses barefoot, and suggested that, 'future historians will place upon record that an appeal had to be made to us, in the year of grace 1880, to abandon the use of artificial foundations tacked on to a living creation of God...' ⁹⁶ Ransom's argument that horses were better off without shoes was both rationally constructed, through his innumerable observations of horses around

⁹¹ Bracy Clark, *Hippodonomia*, 44, 77.

⁹² Ransom is unmasked as 'Free-Lance' in: J. G. Wood, *Horse & Man – Their Mutual Dependencies* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1885), 51, 106.

⁹³ 'Free-Lance', *Horses and Roads*, 1880, London: Longmans, Green & Co. 'Free-Lance', *Horses and Roads*, 1881, London: Longmans, Green & Co.

⁹⁴ 'Free-Lance', *Horses and Roads*, 1880, 51.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 198-199.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

the world that were capable of doing their work without shoes, and unmistakably religious in nature.

By 1882, the barefoot discussion could be found in periodicals and newspapers across the country, as individuals who had experimented with working their horses without shoes wrote in about their successes, and others continued to dismiss it as impossible nonsense.⁹⁷ *The North Devon Journal* was a particular hub of sometimes heated debate. Whitmore Baker (identified varyingly as a chemist and surgeon-dentist) wrote a letter explaining how he had successfully transitioned his horses to doing their work without shoes. Since the removal of the shoes, he stated, his horses had not been lame once.⁹⁸ Arthur Frederick Astley, son of Sir John Dugdale Astley, provided examples of horses working successfully without shoes, such as London-based Dr R Ralph Llewellyn's horse, and readily provided rebuttals to critics (fig. 7). It is quite likely that these gentlemen formed connections through this newspaper. Astley was a particularly vocal proponent of keeping horses barefoot. He wrote multiple reader letters to the *North Devon Journal*, *The London Standard*, and a three-page article for *Popular Science Monthly*.⁹⁹ Astley's public advocacy should come as no

⁹⁷ "Another Revolution Threatened," *Western Gazette*, 5 July, 1878, 2. "Shod versus Unshod Horses," *Edinburgh Evening News*, 10 July, 1878, 3. "Can the Horses Work Without Shoes?" *Berwickshire News*, 20 August, 1878, 4. "Unshod Horses," *Glasgow Evening Post*, 26 June, 1879, 2. "Unshod Horses," *Western Times*, 18 March, 1882, 4. "Unshod Horses," *London Evening Standard*, 29 March, 1882, 3. "Unshod Horses," *London Evening Standard*, 30 March, 1882, 2. "Unshod Horses," *Western Times*, 31 March, 1882, 6.

⁹⁸ "Local and District Intelligence," *Western Daily Mercury*, 14 May, 1874, 3. "District News," *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 8. May, 1878, 3. "Unshod Horses," *North Devon Journal*, March 23, 1882, 7. "Unshod Horses," *North Devon Journal*, 20 April, 1882, 5. "Unshod Horses," *North Devon Journal*, 15 June, 1882, 2. "Unshod Horses," *North Devon Journal*, 29 June, 1882, 8. "Unshod Horses," *North Devon Journal*, 3 August, 1882, 5.

⁹⁹ "Unshod Horses," *London Evening Standard*, 28 March, 1882, 6. "Unshod Horses," *North Devon Journal*, 6 July, 1882, 8. Arthur F. Astley, "Working Capacity of Unshod Horses," *Popular Science Monthly*, Vol. 24 (February 1884): 542 – 544.

surprise, however, when it becomes evident that he was a staunch anti-vivisectionist (and a member of the London Anti-Vivisection Society), and a subscriber to *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*.¹⁰⁰



Fig. 7. An annotated photograph from 1883 showing the forefoot of Arthur Astley's horse 'Tommy', National Horseracing Museum collection.

Considering the overlap between the emerging barefoot campaign, evangelical animal advocacy, and other public advocacy campaigns such as anti-vivisection, it should hardly come as a surprise that the Reverend J. G. Wood, the hugely successful natural history author, was a great believer in keeping horses unshod. As Lightman notes, Wood was one of many popular science authors of the time who employed 'visual theology' to show the reading public that there was an

¹⁰⁰ "Anti-Vivisection Meetings," *Kent & Sussex Courier*, 23 March, 1877, 3. "The Abolition of Vivisection," *Morning Post*, 4 January, 1878, 7. "Anti-Vivisection Meeting at Shadwell," *East London Observer*, 12 January, 1878, 2. "Riot at the Metropolitan Tabernacle," *South London Press*, 23 February, 1878, 9. "London Anti-Vivisection Society," *Western Daily Press*, May 25, 1878, 6. "The Suppression of Vivisection," *Morning Post*, 18 June 1880, 3. "Subscriptions – 1882," *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, January 18, 1883, 9.

‘infinite power, wisdom, and benevolence at work in the universe,’ — the same theoretical approach taken by George Ransom in *Horses & Roads*. This popular science, according to Lightman, harnessed the emerging mass visual culture to school its readers to see the Divine message within the natural world.¹⁰¹

Alongside being one of the most successful natural history authors of the day, Wood had a burgeoning public lecture circuit that took him all around Britain and to the United States. One of J. G. Wood’s most controversial lectures was the one on horses. Wood used his lecture platform as a pulpit from which he damned horseshoes as unnecessary and causing disease, and preached the capabilities and benefits of the unshod hoof. He used the many examples given to him by Dr R. Ralph Llewellyn, Arthur Astley and Whitmore Baker in his talks. In one case, he even brought ‘Dolly’, an unshod horse belonging to a Dr Channing Pearce, along to his talk at the Geological Museum in Brixton as a live example, where she was exhibited in the adjoining greenhouse.¹⁰²

With the addition of Wood to the cast of characters that formed the late 19th century barefoot movement, this group formed what can best be referred to as ‘Barefoot Evangelists’. It was a small, articulate, and well-organised network, which was incredibly good at publicising and advocating its cause. They were marked by their almost evangelical zeal for damning horseshoes as something used by unthinking horse owners, and their dedication to proving that horses could and did do all of the work required of them better without shoes. It is worth pointing out that the Barefoot Evangelists were all well-educated men, and some of them even worked in medical professions, which must have lent their crusade some much needed scientific credibility.

In 1885, Wood published *The Horse & Man- Their Mutual Dependencies*, his equine protection manifesto. Wood stated from the outset that his goal was to

¹⁰¹ Bernard Lightman, “The Visual Theology of Victorian Popularizers of Science: From Reverent Eye to Chemical Retina,” *Isis*, 91, no. 4 (December, 2000): 651-680.

¹⁰² Rev. Theodore Wood, *The Rev. J. G. Wood – His Life and Work* (London: Cassell & Company, 1890), 217 – 263. (*See especially* p. 240).

illustrate to his readers how the relationship between man and horse could be changed from ‘master’ and ‘slave’ to ‘fellow-workers’, and to ensure that horses could live a long and productive life.¹⁰³ Wood carefully explained the functions of the horse’s hoof before exposing the problems with shoeing as it was commonly practiced. He criticised the ubiquitous practice among farriers of paring the sole of the hoof, and declared calkins as ineffective at preventing slipping. He likened calkins on horseshoes to women walking in high-heeled shoes.¹⁰⁴ Wood proclaimed that the hoof had been perfectly created by God, and man was so foolish as to tamper with it by rasping the walls, cutting the sole and the frog, and then nailing a heavy shoe onto it.¹⁰⁵ Instead of seeing that the hoof was perfectly created, humans interfered, and then wondered why the horse went lame, which Wood stated was the ‘equivalent to saying that the Creator did not know how to make a horse.’¹⁰⁶

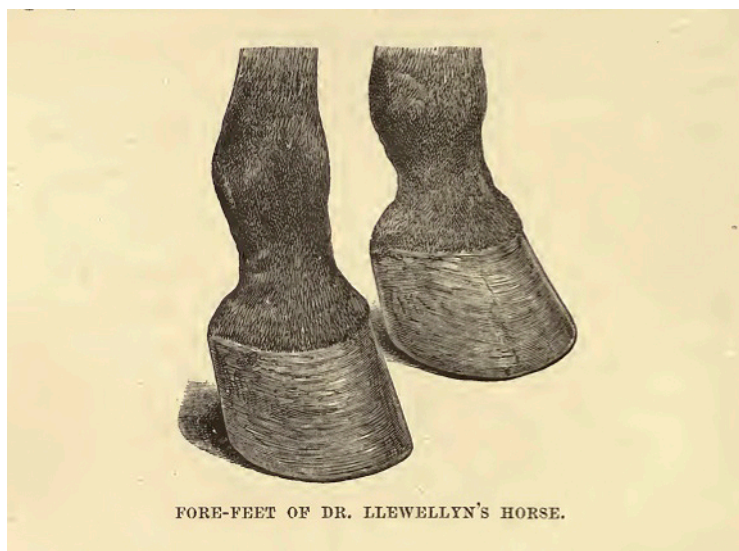


Fig. 8. The unshod hooves of Dr R. Ralph Llewellyn’s horse, pictured in J.G. Wood’s *The Horse & Man*. Dr Llewellyn is primarily remembered today for being the surgeon who conducted the post-mortem examination of Jack the Ripper’s first victim.

¹⁰³ Rev. J. G. Wood, *Horse & Man: Their Mutual Dependencies* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1885), xviii.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 116 – 126.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 137-139.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 141.

For Wood, there was only one solution, and that was to keep horses unshod. He provided instructions of how to transition a horse from shoes to working barefoot. Wood relied on examples and illustrations of horses that belonged to his fellow Barefoot Evangelists, who had carefully documented their horses' unshod hooves by having photographs taken of them, to construct his argument (fig. 8).¹⁰⁷ 'The shoe,' he asserted, 'causes laminitis, quittors, thrush and navicular disease, all being inflammatory in their nature. Contracted hoof, greasy heels, and sand-crack are equally attributable to the shoe, and make the very name of farrier a terror to all who care for the welfare of their horses.'¹⁰⁸ Aside from briefly touching on the other horse welfare subjects of the bearing rein, tail-docking, and general horse handling, *Horse & Man* was nothing short of a polemic against the evils of shoeing. Out of 335 pages, two hundred were devoted to the horse's hoof. The book was largely ridiculed in the press for its stance on shoeing, but letters of support and success stories followed its publication.¹⁰⁹ As one of the most successful natural history authors of his time, the impact this book had on Wood's readership cannot be underestimated.

The barefoot movement evidently captured the attention of a few within racing circles as well. Arthur Astley's photograph showing the hoof of his horse, Tommy, is in a photograph album of the Cannon family—a veritable 19th century racing dynasty—which can be found at the National Horseracing Museum today (fig. 7). A few reports in the sporting press also highlight that some horses were running unshod during the 1880s, such as the horse 'Tonans' at Shrewsbury races in 1883, and St. Gatien at Newmarket in 1885.¹¹⁰ Meanwhile, on the other side of the Channel, British-born trainers Tom and

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 158 – 194.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 196.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 109 – 110.

¹¹⁰ "Shrewsbury and Derby Notes, and Warwick and Manchester Anticipations," *Sporting Life*, 17 November, 1883, 2. "Turf and Sale Ring Notes," *Sporting Life*, 4 November, 1885, 2. "Tufts of the Turf," *Sheffield Independent*, 15 April, 1889, 8.

Harry Jennings kept all of their horses in training barefoot.¹¹¹ Australian horses, which tended to be trained and raced barefoot at home, were also kept unshod when they were brought to England.¹¹²

By the turn of the 20th century, and with the death of George Ransom, J G Wood and Arthur Astley, the barefoot debate had nearly died out. In the early years of the 20th century, it was racehorses who were publicly running unshod.¹¹³ The influx of American racehorses and jockeys had put considerable pressure on trainers and owners, who saw their competitive edge waning due to the Americans' new race-riding style and alternative ways of training and keeping horses.¹¹⁴ George Lambton ran his horses without shoes while he waited for American racing plates, which were lighter than British ones, to be sent to him.¹¹⁵ Lily Langtry's Australian-bred horse Merman successfully ran races without shoes.¹¹⁶ Unlike the Barefoot Evangelists of the late 19th century, there is no indication racehorse trainers and owners in the early 20th century were motivated by ideas of horse welfare in their decisions to race horses unshod. Instead, the need to win was the primary impetus for their experimentation.

¹¹¹ "Twenty Years on the Turf," *The Sportsman*, 25 March, 1880, 2-3.

¹¹² Nat Gould, "Australian Horses," *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 19 October, 1895, 245. "Our Note Book," *The Sporting Times*, 3 December, 1898, 7.

¹¹³ The Morpeth Herald made reference to J. G. Wood's book in an article in 1913 which discussed the competition that was being held by the Roads Improvement Society and the RSPCA to find the best shoe to suit the new road surfaces. See: "Horse Shoes," *Morpeth Herald*, 18 July, 1913, 5.

¹¹⁴ "Sporting Innovation: The American Invasion of the British Turf and Links, 1895-1905," *Sport History Review*, Wray Vamplew, 35, no. 2 (November 2004): 122-137.

¹¹⁵ George Lambton, *Men and Horses I Have Known* (London: J. A. Allen & Co., 1963), 246.

¹¹⁶ Lillie Langtry, *The Days I Knew* (North Hollywood: Panoply Publications, 2000), 256-257.

Conclusions

Throughout the 19th century, multiple attempts were made to improve farriery and hoof-care, which were rationalised by the interwoven discourses of humanitarian sentiment, Natural Theology and improved equine efficiency, and encompassed technological improvements in horse shoes, and improving the skills of farriers who trimmed hooves and fitted shoes. The hooves of Britain's growing equine population required regular shoeing and attention if horses were to remain useful. Early members of the Royal Veterinary College tried to better understand how the horse's hoof functioned, and concluded that farriers were causing a great deal of damage to horses' hooves. The doctrine of the importance of the frog to hoof health and grip established by Edward Coleman and Bracy Clark remained central facets of equine hoof-care discourse throughout the 19th century. Veterinary surgeons harnessed the rhetoric of animal protection to make the case that poor farriery and ineffective horseshoes were causing horses unnecessary pain and distress. Simultaneously, they emphasised their own empathy for horses, and sought to raise not just their own status within the emerging veterinary profession, but raise the status of veterinary surgeons above that of farriers.

With no farriers publicly voicing their opinions on the issue of farrier education or practice, veterinary surgeons keen to raise their professional status repeated their opinions (whether justified or not), that farriers were incompetent and causing horses to go lame, until it was cemented as doctrine, thereby dominating public discourse. Shoeing competitions introduced at agricultural shows stipulated that horses' feet were to be prepared for shoeing according to the methods set out by veterinary surgeons, demonstrating the extent to which veterinary surgeons were impacting on farriers' work. Later attempts by veterinary surgeons, members of the Worshipful Company of Farriers and the Royal Agricultural Society to implement a registration scheme for farriers and shoeing-smiths clearly did have the goal of improving the quality of horse shoeing, but this scheme was also unmistakably political in nature. Although it was hoped that standards would be improved by only registering shoeing-smiths

who had completed an examination, the very examiners were members of the veterinary profession, and not long-established farriers. Furthermore, a few members of the Royal Veterinary College openly expressed their aspirations that the scheme would eradicate the term ‘farrier’, which left a somewhat ambiguous distinction between ‘veterinary surgeon’ and ‘shoeing-smith,’ demonstrating just how anxious some veterinary surgeons were to distance themselves from their ‘farrier’ past. But veterinary surgeons could not make farriers disappear; they provided an essential service to the nation’s horses, horse owners and handlers. While the registration scheme failed, a grass-roots scheme by regional agricultural societies established mobile farrier schools, which provided education to practicing shoeing-smiths, given by both farriers and veterinary surgeons. The success of this scheme suggests that veterinary surgeons’ anti-farrier rhetoric did not necessarily result in positive lasting change in the standards of farriery. Rather, a scheme which met the needs of farriers by providing a local education service, with teaching provided by a farrier and a veterinary surgeon, could have an enduring impact on the workmanship of farriers and how horses were shod.

By the middle of the 19th century, horseshoe production was increasingly mechanised, and entrepreneurs were developing a wide variety of patent horseshoes. Although these patent horseshoes and horseshoe-related products were developed to alleviate genuine problems for working horses and their handlers and owners, manufacturers also utilised animal protection rhetoric to sell their products. These were horseshoes that respected ‘Nature’, and, therefore, were kind to animals and respectful of the Divinely created horse. Although innovative new horse shoes were primarily designed for use on urban working horses, a small number of horseshoe manufacturers did also create specialist racing plates. Yet, it was urban working horses, and not racehorses, that were the main focus of attention. Racehorses and their hooves, whether for good or ill, were almost invisible. This is hardly surprising; racehorses constituted such a small percentage of the nation’s equine population, and remained in training for fewer years than they had previously. Furthermore, due to the nature of the surfaces they were exercised upon, racehorses were not shod with calkins, nor was slipping on roads a concern.

Religion and anthropomorphism permeated much of the hoof-care debate. From the importance of shoeing horses so that ‘Nature’s pad’, the frog, could come into contact with the ground, to the religious fervour of the barefoot campaigners of the late 19th century, hoof-care and Godliness went hand in hand. Barefoot Evangelists used religious rhetoric, testimonials, lectures and written texts to make their case, and included one of the most successful natural history authors of the period among their ranks. They argued that horses were perfectly capable of doing all the work required of them without shoes, and wove together natural theology, animal protection rhetoric, and collected evidence to form an enticing and controversial mission. It might be easy to dismiss this brief episode in animal history as a short-lived fad, but the debate they started remains as alive as ever, more than 130 years later.¹¹⁷

And what of the racehorses? Efforts during 19th century to improve the lives of horses by improving farriery and hoof-care suggest that, although racehorses were not the primary drivers of research or innovation, they were not entirely immune to these events either. Innovative horseshoes such as the Charlier shoe attracted the attention of racehorse owners, as did the possibility of working horses entirely without shoes. Furthermore, the farrier William Blackmore, who ran the successful mobile farrier school, had also been called to Newmarket to shoe racehorses. This suggests that racehorse owners and trainers sought out the very best farriers, and were willing to pay for a farrier to travel a long distance if he might be able to improve their horse’s soundness and racing performance. Although it is impossible to extrapolate racehorses from the widespread animal protection discourse which surrounded hoof-care and horse shoeing in 19th century Britain, it is difficult to imagine that racehorse trainers, many of whom

¹¹⁷ See, for example: Jamie Jackson, *Horse Owner's Guide to Natural Hoof Care*, 2002, Bozeman, Montana: Star Ridge Publishing. Pete Ramney, *Making Natural Hoof Care Work for You*, 2003, Bozeman, Montana: Star Ridge Publishing. Lucy Nicholas, *The Barefoot Horse*, 2012, London: J. A. Allen & Co. Anni Stonebridge and Jane Cumberlidge, *Barefoot Horse Keeping: The Integrated Horse*, 2016, Marlborough: The Crowood Press Ltd.

(as discussed in Chapter 2) were also keen to raise their own public profiles and be seen as respectable members of society, were completely oblivious to the interrelationship between farriery, humanitarian concern, and equine health and performance. The two latter issues, in particular, have been shown in previous chapters to be key issues for changes to racehorse housing, and significantly influenced racehorse healthcare. Although racehorses were not drivers of change in this particular instance, they were not completely immune to wider developments within hoof-care and farriery in the 19th century.

6. Racehorse Death & Memorialisation

It was 1916, and Sidney Harmer, Keeper of Zoology at the British Museum (Natural History) wanted a horse skeleton. Not any skeleton would do, however; it had to be the skeleton of the Triple-Crown-winning racehorse Isinglass. Three years ago, he had already sent someone to Cheveley Park Stud near Newmarket to exhume the horse's body, only there had been a slight problem. Isinglass had died in December 1911 and, despite being under ground for more than a year, when Harmer's man went to dig up the horse, he found the corpse in 'the most impossible condition imaginable' and 'there was nothing to do but cover it again without attempting to bring it back.'¹

But more than three years had passed since then, and so Harmer enlisted the help of Edward Gerrard & Sons, Naturalists, to try to exhume Isinglass's body for the second time. It was a bit of a logistical operation. Firstly, Mr. Gerrard had to travel up to Newmarket. He also needed 'a box in which to pack the bones' which he recommended sending there in advance, and some men to help him dig up the body, which Fred Paine, Gerrard's contact at Newmarket, was arranging for him.²

On Friday, May 26 1916, Mr Gerrard arrived at Cheveley Park to dig up Isinglass with the help of some hired hands. Unlike at the first exhumation attempt when Cheveley Park was a private residence, the property was now in use as a military hospital to treat injured soldiers. A group of men digging an eight-foot-deep hole just '60 or 70 yards' from the house naturally attracted some attention, which only became greater once they got close to the horse's corpse

¹ Memorandum from S. F. Harmer to C. E. Fagan dated Jan 14, 1913, Natural History Museum Archives, DF 200/57/20.

² Letter from Edward Gerrard & Sons, Naturalists to Dr. S. F. Harmer dated May 17th, 1916, Natural History Museum Archives, DF ZOO/200/63/71. Letter from the Estate Office, High Street, Newmarket to S. F. Harmer, dated May 13, 1916, Natural History Museum Archives, DF ZOO/200/63/71.

because of ‘the stench being very strong.’ ‘Staff and patients’ came to see what was happening, only to be greeted with the sight of Mr. Gerard and his men, wading about in the ‘unpleasant wet mass’ which surrounded the decomposing horse.³

Although Mr. Gerrard succeeded in his mission to bring Isinglass’s skeleton back to the museum, one part of Isinglass that he was unable to recover were the horse’s hooves. These were apparently ‘cut off quite informally’ by a veterinary surgeon before the horse was buried. Major McCalmott, Isinglass’s owner, had the hooves mounted by the taxidermist Rowland Ward, and he had taken them with him to Africa when he moved.⁴

The macabre farce of Isinglass’s exhumation raises so many questions, not least of which is why on earth would anyone go to so much trouble to obtain a horse skeleton? For humans, co-existing with racehorses sometimes also involved experiencing a horse’s death. In a racehorse or former racehorse’s death, humans were often active participants, either by riding the horse when it sustained a fatal injury, caring for the horse when it was gravely ill, or by firing the bullet that ended the animal’s life. But, as Isinglass’s exhumation story suggests, some famous racehorses were buried after they died, and the co-existence of humans with racehorse bodies with did not necessarily end after the horse’s death. It also indicates active human participation in the preservation of parts of a racehorse’s body, and implies that certain racehorses were still valued by humans after they had died. A quick search of the National Horseracing Museum’s collection database reveals more than thirty ‘bits of racehorse,’ ranging from a framed scrap of horse hide to two stuffed horse heads, all saved for posterity. Like Isinglass’s exhumation, these objects raise the question of why anyone would want to save parts of a dead horse.

³ Letter from Edward Gerrard & Sons to S. F. Harmer dated May 27, 1916, Natural History Museum Archives, DF ZOO/200/63/71.

⁴ Letter from F. Paine at Bedford House, Newmarket dated May 31st, 1916, Natural History Museum Archives, DF ZOO/200/63/71.

The goal of this chapter is to see what racehorse memorialisation can tell us about human relationships with racehorses. We can see modern mourning of racehorses play out in real time today whenever a successful one dies suddenly, and the great outpouring of public grief from horse racing fans that follows. The press often interviews people directly connected with the horse, who explain what happened and what the horse meant to them personally. Racing fans post old videos of the deceased horse's greatest triumphs on social media.⁵ As this chapter will reveal, this is not a new phenomenon.

To attempt to understand the meanings of racehorse death and memorialisation in the 19th and early 20th century involves taking analytical approaches from historians and animal studies scholars from various disciplines, as well as literary theorists, and drawing on a wide range of primary sources. Textual sources, images, paintings, literature, gravestones, taxidermy and skeletons; they all ensured that racehorses lived on after their deaths, and demonstrate what racehorses meant to humans. Perhaps the most exciting of these sources are parts of deceased racehorse's bodies which have been preserved. These, quite literally, put the horse into the history of horse racing, and give us the tantalizing experience of coming face to face with equine ghosts.

This chapter will first examine recent advances in historical understandings of animal death. I will then explore the 19th century narrative of racehorse life and death depicted in fiction and art to show how racehorse burial, which featured a Thoroughbred that was repeatedly sold down the line after it had been discarded from racing, until, when it was no longer suitable for any labour, the horse was sent to the knackers. I will use gravestones, skeletons and taxidermy to show how these formed a counter-narrative of racehorse existence in which a racehorse was valued by its owner even the horse had died. The afterlives of the famous racehorses St. Simon and Persimmon will then form two case studies which enable a deeper exploration of this counter-narrative. I stress here, as I will do

⁵ Recent examples are the death of Kauto Star in 2015 and Vautour in 2016. Both horses died in accidents off the racecourse and out of the public eye.

again, that these two horses were not and still are not representative of the majority of racehorses of the 19th and early 20th century; they were equine celebrities. I do not believe, however, that their exceptional nature disqualifies them as animals worthy of study. Rather, as I will show, their afterlives allow us to understand what made a racehorse successful in the eyes of humans, and how humans constructed the idea of a successful racehorse and propagated that narrative of equine success beyond the horse's natural lifespan. The act of memorialising racehorses after death constituted a tangible, material counter-narrative to the dominant narrative of racehorse life and death within art and popular culture— and a real-life exception to what occurred to most racehorses after they had died or been destroyed. The afterlives of racehorses help to make the often-impenetrable historical human-animal relationship visible.

Historiography of Animal Death

Death and the material culture of death have become quite popular subjects for historical study. Human and animal mortality and memorialisation have provided new ways of understanding human and animal existence, which offer us new ways to think about the past. Deborah Lutz's recent work on Victorian secular relics has shown how parts of the deceased physical human body, and other material mementoes which were associated with the person when living, had 'a charmed ability to originate narrative' and could 'contain lingerings of the lost self'.⁶ Although she draws connections between such practices and saintly relics, she points out that 'the increase in relic love that began in the late 18th century was due in part to a growing cult of personality, an emphasis on the heroic individual...'⁷ Lutz explores how the variety of meanings and memories embodied in such secular relics relied heavily on their uniqueness and known connections to persons and places. Parts of deceased humans, therefore, were ways for people to remember those who could never return, and celebrate their

⁶ Deborah Lutz, *Relics of Death in Victorian Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1, 32.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 25

lives. These parts depended on other humans for their meanings and importance; people told stories about dead people with things. Yet, as these relics became almost ubiquitous, it was easy for parts of deceased humans to become commercial products should they become detached from these known meanings.⁸ As previous chapters have already shown, humans also told stories about racehorses, and attributed anthropomorphic qualities to them. Lutz's work suggests that there may be a correlation between Victorian secular relics of humans, which depended on narratives for their meaning, and parts of racehorses' bodies which were preserved after death.

Horses were not the only animals that lived on after their deaths, however. In her work on pet-keeping in 19th century Paris, Kete writes, 'canine death was a weak intrusion of reality into the insistent fiction of pet-keeping.'⁹ She explains that, when faced with a dead pet dog, humans had a variety of options of what to do with the body. In most cases, the carcass was disposed of with the household rubbish, although, wealthy owners could also have their dog stuffed by a taxidermist. After the establishment of an urban pet cemetery in Paris in 1899, owners who could afford it could also have their dogs buried in marked graves.¹⁰ Co-existing with dogs, then as now, meant that humans inevitably experienced their death because humans tended to outlive them.¹¹ Affluent humans made decisions about what to do with their pet after it had died.

Animal burials and the emergence of pet cemeteries in the late 19th century have attracted the attention of cultural historians, historical geographers, and archaeologists. Howell uses pet cemeteries and burials to show how 'in these odd

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 147. See also: Deborah Lutz, "The Dead Still Among Us: Victorian Secular Relics, Hair Jewellery, and Death Culture," *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 39 (2011): 127–142.

⁹ Kathleen Kete, *The Beast in the Boudoir: Petkeeping in Nineteenth Century Paris* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 89.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 89 – 91.

¹¹ For a varied exploration of historical and contemporary animal death, see: Margo de Mello, *Mourning Animals* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2016).

projects, an intertwined geography of humans and other animals was constructed, not simply in material form but beyond this in emotion and imagination, reason and reflection, grief and hope.’¹² Kean concurs this observation, noting that the focus in such cemeteries has been on people’s relationships and emotional connections with specific animals.¹³ Pet burial, therefore, was a way for humans to express their sadness and recall fond memories of the time they co-existed with a specific animal.

Horses, however, did not live in the same proximity to humans as pet dogs or cats, which tended to live in people’s houses. Yet as chapter 1 has shown, people still sought to understand how racehorses felt, and interpreted their behaviour to mean a variety of things. Successful racehorses were also valued for what they achieved and their cooperation with humans. As with pet dogs, equine death was part of the human experience of living and working with horses. Unlike pet cemeteries which captured the grief and emotional connection to animals which frequently shared a home with humans, however, Collison’s research into horse graves and memorials in the United States finds that these functioned primarily as a ‘trophy room’ for owners to showcase and preserve the success they enjoyed through these horses beyond the animals’ natural lifetime. He does not deny, however, that such graves also demonstrate ‘a respect, an admiration’ for the animal which had died.¹⁴ His research implies a slightly different human connection with prized horses that were buried, when compared with pets during this period. While pet cemeteries were expressions of humans’ sentimental connection with their animals, racehorse gravestones were primarily a way for humans to remember the animal’s achievements.

¹² Philip Howell, “A Place for the Animal Dead: Pets, Pet Cemeteries and Animal Ethics in Late Victorian Britain,” *Ethics, Place & Environment: A Journal of Philosophy & Geography*, 5, no. 1 (2002): 20.

¹³ Hilda Kean, “Human and animal space in historic ‘pet’ cemeteries in London, New York and Paris,” in *Animal Death*, J. Johnston & F. Probyn-Rapsey (eds.) (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2013), 21 – 42.

¹⁴ Garry Collison, “Remembering Man’s Other Best Friend: US Horse Graves and Memorials in Historical Perspective,” *Markers*, XXII (2005): 70 – 107.

A relatively recent resurgence of interest in taxidermy as material objects worthy of study outside of the field of natural history has seen a flurry of works on the subject.¹⁵ Viewed as a whole, these works show the variety of ways that historical and contemporary taxidermy can be read by scholars from different fields. The most significant theoretical and methodological influence on many of these works has been ‘thing theory’—championed by Arjun Appadurai, Igor Kopytoff, Asa Briggs, Janet Hoskins, and Bill Brown—which advocates studying the biographies and ‘social lives’ of material objects.¹⁶ Appadurai

¹⁵ P. A. Morris, *Rowland Ward: Taxidermist to the World* (Suffolk: Lavenham Press, 2003). P. A. Morris, *Walter Potter and his Museum of Curious Taxidermy* (Ascot: MPM Publishing, 2008). P.A. Morris, *A History of Taxidermy: art, science and bad taste* (Ascot: MPM Publishing, 2010). Michelle Henning, “Anthropomorphic taxidermy and the death of nature: The curious art of Hermann Ploucquet, Walter Potter and Charles Waterton,” *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 35, no. 2 (2007,): 663-678. Merle M. Patchett, *Putting Animals on Display: Geographies of Taxidermy Practice* (PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2010). Rachel Poliquin, “The Matter and Meaning of Museum Taxidermy,” *Museum and Society* 6, no. 2 (2008): 123-134. Rachel Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012). Steve Baker, “Dead, dead, dead, dead, dead,” in *Routledge Handbook of Human-Animal Studies*, Garry Marvin and Susan McHugh (eds.) (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), 290 – 304. Giovanni Aloï, *Botched Taxidermy: New Animal Bodies in Contemporary Art* (PhD thesis, Goldsmiths, University of London 2015). Sawn Sanders and Jill Hohenstein, “Death on Display: Reflections on Taxidermy and Children's Understanding of Life and Death,” *Curator*, 58(2015): 251–262. Jude Philp, “The Natural Object: Exhibiting the Macleay Museum's Specimen Collections,” *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, 29 (March 2016): 11 – 26. Andrew C Kitchener, “The history of taxidermy at National Museums Scotland,” *History Scotland*, 17, no. 2 (2017): 38-39. Verity Darke, “Nineteenth-Century Taxidermy Manuals and Our Mutual Friend,” *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 24 (2017): 1 – 23. *See also: Antennae*, issue 6 and 7, 2008.

¹⁶ Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Janet Hoskins, *Biographical Objects, How Things Tell the Stories of People's Lives* (New York and

proposes that, ‘persons and things are not radically distinct categories, and that the transactions that surround things are invested with the properties of social relations.’¹⁷ Kopytoff puts forward that a series of questions can be asked of a ‘thing’ to write its biography, in the same way one asks a series of questions to create a biography of a human subject. As he states, ‘Biographies of things can make salient what might otherwise remain obscure.’¹⁸ Hoskins, who has also written extensively about the cultural biography of things, points out that, ‘The imagination works on objects to turn commodities, gifts, or ordinary utilitarian tools into sometimes very significant possessions, which draw their power from biographical experiences and the stories told about these.’¹⁹ Critically, Bill Brown argues that ‘things’ are not the same as objects; ‘we look *through* objects (to see what they disclose about history, society, nature or culture—above all, what they disclose about *us*) but we only catch a glimpse of things.’²⁰

Rachel Poliquin applies object biographies and thing theory to reconsider taxidermy, which she interprets to be neither purely object nor animal, but an ‘animal-thing’ which occupies a hybrid space between the two.²¹ ‘Animal or object? Animal and object? This is the irresolvable tension that defines all taxidermy,’ she states. The animal nature of taxidermy allows her to push ideas

London, Routledge, 1998). Bill Brown, “Thing Theory,” *Critical Inquiry*, 28, no. 1, Things (Autumn, 2001): 1-22. Asa Briggs, *Victorian Things* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1998).

¹⁷ Arjun Appadurai, “The Thing Itself,” *Public Culture*, 18, no. 1 (2006) 15. Arjun Appadurai, “Introduction: commodities and the politics of value,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Arjun Appadurai (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3 – 63.

¹⁸ Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditisation as Process,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Arjun Appadurai (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 67.

¹⁹ Hoskins, *Biographical Objects*, 196.

²⁰ Bill Brown, “Thing Theory, 4.

²¹ Poliquin, “The Matter and Meaning of Museum Taxidermy,” 127. Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo*, 5, 7-9. 39.

of materiality and animality further, thereby unravelling the meanings within animals preserved beyond their natural life for private and public display.²² She writes,

‘Human crafted objects are inherently endowed with meaning. They were made for particular purposes. They variously fulfil those purposes, fail, or are reimagined for other functions. In contrast, animals have no innate meaning: meaning is always a human intellectual imposition. When the obstinately unmeaningful presence of animals is purposefully manipulated through human craft, the resulting animal-thing is, predictably enough, disconcerting. All taxidermy provokes the recognition that this thing on display, at once animal and object, is neither fully animal nor fully object.... By creating animal-things, taxidermy necessarily creates encounters.’²³

Poliquin’s work raises fundamental questions about our understanding of taxidermy, our relationship with animals, and whether death causes an animal to cease being an animal and instead become a thing. By looking at the taxidermy of pets, she finds the layers of meaning are held, not just in the taxidermied animal, but in the process of taxidermy itself. She points out that, to see a taxidermied pet, or any other domestic animal which was named, marks that animal out as having a distinct biography of ‘admirable characteristics’ which defined its co-existence with humans.²⁴ Yet, ‘if the pet *were* human, taxidermy would be unthinkable.’ Taxidermy, therefore, is something that happens because of animality – non-humanness. Thus animality, anthropomorphism, and human emotions all co-exist in such taxidermy. Considering Appadurai’s point that ‘persons and things are not radically different categories,’ Poliquin’s conclusions that we can learn much about human relationships with animals from taxidermy, and that taxidermy is neither animal nor object, but a meaning-laden yet

²² See also: Rachel Poliquin, “Balto the Dog,” in *The Afterlives of Animals*, Samuel Alberti (ed.) (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 92 – 109.

²³ Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo*, 38 – 39.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 211

unknowable thing, seem a logical progression of thing theory's application to taxidermy.

In Desmond's 2016 work on animal death, she points out that taxidermy creates an 'illusion of realism'. This process, she says, relies upon humans successfully removing the evidence of the animal's death, and humans' participation in that death. When humans engage with taxidermy, she states, 'the relationship between viewer and object is fundamentally theatrical.'²⁵ Karen Jones breaks down the illusions of taxidermy by showing the reality of its creation in the late 19th and early 20th century. In her work on the making of the Powell-Cotton collection, she highlights the importance of appropriate storage of the dead animal to reduce the risk of pests and decay while it was transported, and the race against time to preserve the decomposing body once the carcass had arrived in the taxidermist's workshop. Only after the hide of the animal had been through the process of stabilising it, could the taxidermist commence his work of bringing the animal back to still-life. Furthermore, she explains that, once completed, taxidermy could be either 'trophy' or 'taxonomy;' the site of display was critical to meaning making.²⁶ In the case of the trophy hunting in the American West, she states that, 'The trophy allowed for tales to be told and served as a visual prompt for an oral narrative that glorified the hunter hero, the winning of the West, and the sanctification of the animal encounter.' Therefore, the taxidermy trophy animal became an actor in a performative narrative.²⁷

²⁵ Jane C. Desmond, *Displaying Death and Animating Life: Human-Animal Relations in Art, Science and Everyday Life* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 33.

²⁶ Karen Jones, "The Rhinoceros and the Chatham Railway: Taxidermy and the Production of Animal Presence in the 'Great Indoors,'" *History*, 101, no. 348 (December 2016): 710–735.

²⁷ Karen R. Jones, *Epiphany in the Wilderness: Hunting, Nature, and Performance in the Nineteenth-Century American West* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2015), 244.

Narratives of Life and Death

To analyse racehorse lives and deaths is to simultaneously speak about facts as well as fictions. The fictional stories told about horses, beginning with the Houyhnhmns in *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), gave birth to a sub-genre of equine art, literature and theatre which used imagined equine narrators as a literary tool for social change. This sub-genre sought to understand equine life experiences, and humans' accountability for equine lives and deaths through the medium of fiction. Diana Donald's work on horse life and death narratives in the 18th and 19th centuries traces the evolution of these equine narratives from their inception in *Gulliver's Travels*. She shows that, after Thomas Gooch's series *The Life and Death of a Race-Horse, in a Series of Six Different Stages* (displayed at the Royal Academy in 1783) which inspired Charles Dibdin's famous ballad *The High-Mettled Racer* (1785), racehorses, or former racehorses, became frequent protagonists in these fictional horse narratives.²⁸ Whether in paintings and prints, theatre or literature, popular narratives of 19th century Thoroughbred lives tended to follow the same formula; the young Thoroughbred was born into an idyllic world, and then trained to become a successful racehorse. After a few victories, the racehorse either suffered an injury that ended its racing career, or simply became slower and stopped winning. This caused the horse to be sold as a hunter, and once it was no longer useful there, it was then sold further down the line as a coach horse, and then to pull a cab or journeyman's cart. Eventually, emaciated and no longer fit for any work, it was shot.

Charles Towne's series of eight paintings, titled *Episodes in the Life of a Racehorse* (19th c.), ends with a dead, emaciated horse (Fig. 1). One of three hounds licks at blood spilled from the dead horse, indicating the horse's future use as dog food. The fine stable building, stately home and tranquil landscape in the background of the image, contrast sharply with the emaciated corpse of the former racehorse, implying that human wealth does not spare a once-prized

²⁸ Diana Donald, *Picturing Animals in Britain, 1750-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 203 – 232.

animal from a rather undignified end as dog-meat. In one of E. Hacker after J. F. Herring sen.'s series of paintings, *The High Mettled Racer* (named after and inspired by Dibdin's work), *A Case for the Kennels* shows a well-turned-out horse and trap carrying a dead horse away. Its head and tail hang out limply over the trap, depicting an end far removed from racing glory.²⁹ As Donald concludes, 'from the time of Stubbs and Hogarth onwards, few people could contemplate images of the horse in its glory without bringing to mind the tragic antithesis.'³⁰ If we take Donald's conclusion to its logical next step: the act of seeing a young racehorse in the flesh at a racecourse resulted in the person simultaneously imagining its future life as something other than a racehorse, and perhaps even its death at a knacker's yard.



Fig. 1. Charles Towne, *Episodes in the Life of a Racehorses*, oil on canvas, c. 1800-1850, © Dreweatts & Bloomsbury, used with permission.

²⁹ This series was reproduced in the *New Sporting Magazine*. See in particular: "The High-Mettled Racer," *New Sporting Magazine*, 14, no. 84 (December 1847): 392 – 395.

³⁰ Diana Donald, *Picturing Animals in Britain*, 232.

The life-courses of successful, famous racehorses, however, were vastly different from the potent (and quite likely accurate) racehorse-fallen-on-hard-times narrative depicted in literature and art. Unless successful racehorses died young during training or at a race, after a relatively brief racing career, mares and stallions were retired to stud, where they spent the rest of their days until their death, often at an advanced age. Although racing and stud successes tended to ensure that a horse was not sold ‘down the line’, they did not guarantee future immortality, however. As an unknown writer observed in 1884, ‘The horse, even though he may have won a fortune for his master, as a rule, goes literally to the dogs at last. Some few of the wonders of the turf have escaped that indignity.’³¹ Yet, today we can find many surviving examples of such ‘wonders,’ and the vast majority are still associated with human-attributed meanings to individual racehorses. Those few racehorses which were honoured with burials and gravestones, and had parts of their material bodies preserved as skeletons and taxidermy, were exceptions to the already exceptional, and it is important to keep this in mind when attempting to extract wider meanings from such material remains.

Like some pets, a small number of prized racehorses were awarded human-like burial, their bodies interred and their final resting place marked with a headstone.³² The majority of headstones are quite simple, with the horse’s name, year of birth and death, and a few important races which the animal had won or a list of famous offspring, while a few take more elaborate forms. The opulent grave of the mare Doris (located at Childwickbury Stud near St. Albans), which is easily the most impressive of its kind, forms the centrepiece of a larger

³¹ “Famous Horses,” *Grantham Journal*, 2 August, 1884, 3.

³² A severe storm toppled a tree at Hare Park in 2010, revealing the skeleton of a racehorse beneath it, the tree likely planted as a memorial of some kind to the horse. This discovery was in keeping with an urban legend in racing circles that the famous sire Pot8os was buried beneath a tree at Hare Park, leading a team of archaeologists to conduct extensive tests on the skeleton. The skeleton forms the feature of a new gallery on racehorse breeding and DNA at the National Horseracing Museum.

racehorse graveyard at the establishment (fig. 2).³³ This towering granite memorial to a relatively unsuccessful racehorse, who gained notoriety for having foaled a number of Classic winners, reads: ‘DORIS, by Loved One – Laurette. Foaled 1898. Died 1917. Among her many foals were the winners Little Dolly, Lady Portland, Selsey Bill, White Star, Radiant, Bright, Silver Star, Princess Dorrie, Winner of the One Thousand & Oaks 1914 and Sunstar, Winner of the Two Thousand and the Derby 1911.’

At The Durdans near Epsom, the Derby winner Amato was buried in a marked grave in 1841. A further five famous racehorses associated with the establishment were buried there in the late 19th and early 20th century, forming another equine graveyard at a stud. The Duke of Portland buried a number of his prized horses in the grounds at Welbeck Abbey. Although the horse graveyard that was once there is no longer in existence in its original form, the gravestones have been removed into storage for conservation reasons. At a former stud in Exning, a village near Newmarket, the Derby winner Grand Parade’s headstone has been preserved next to the modern riding arena. Similar single graves from the 19th century can also be found at Brecongill Stud, Middleham, and at East Langton for the steeplechaser Lottery.³⁴ Thus, a pattern begins to emerge of exceptional racehorses of the 19th and early twentieth century being buried in marked graves by their nobleman owners.

³³ This monument is grade II listed by Historic England since 2012.

³⁴ Some of the information in this survey of racehorse graves and burials in Britain comes from research visits and chance findings. Further information sourced from: Jan Toms, *Animal Graves and Memorials* (Buckinghamshire: Shire Publications, 2006).



Fig. 2. The monument to Dorris surrounded by other racehorse graves at Childwickbury Stud.

Wording on such graves, most of which mention why the horse was valued by humans, indicates an equine worth measured by accomplishments— famous wins and/or famous offspring. A stone plaque hidden behind the King Edward VIII Memorial Hall in Newmarket, which commemorates a racehorse named Albert who died suddenly during a trial in 1831, indicates a potentially greater meaning behind these gravestones, however.

‘ALBERT, alas! thy race is run,
 Untimely sunk thy setting sun,
 But spotless is thy racing fame,
 Unconquered is thy name,
 When other steeds forgotten be,
 Still must my memory rest on thee.
 I saw thee heave thy latest sigh,
 I saw thee struggle, fall, and die.’³⁵

³⁵ The engraved words are so severely eroded that they can only be deciphered by making a rubbing. This memorial plaque was likely moved from its previous location

The wording on this memorial differs notably from the wording on racehorse gravestones. It explicitly writes an empathic human actor into the horse's 'noble death' narrative, a person who saw 'struggle' and who cannot forget the sight of Albert dying before them. Yet Albert the racehorse is memorialised because he died prematurely and was 'unconquered'; he never lost a race.

Examining gravestones of racehorses in England lends weight to Collison's analysis that horse graves were outdoor 'trophy rooms,' and McMannus' opinion that such a graveyard 'honours the horse, but also creates an ambience for the stud farm or location in which the horse is buried.'³⁶ The marked burials of racehorses, where they occurred, functioned similarly to a room decorated with racing plates worn by winning horses, such as at Stanley House stables (now Godolphin Stables), connecting an establishment with a history of success. Yet, the very act of marked burial (and let us remind ourselves that horses are not small dogs, but require a lot more digging to dispose of a corpse in such a way) points towards a human act which implies a desire to preserve memories, and the creation of a place in which to engage in the act of remembering a specific animal.³⁷ Concurrently, the act of burying a deceased racehorse in a marked grave runs in direct opposition to widespread perception at the time that all

when the Memorial Hall was built in 1914. It is possible that Albert was buried nearby, but there is no evidence of this.

³⁶ Phil McMannus, Glenn Albrechts and Raewyn Graham (eds.) *The Global Horseracing Industry* (London and New York: Routledge, 201), 25.

³⁷ In an anecdote recounted in 1893, the famous racehorse Dr Syntax, who resided at the Palace Stables at Newmarket, was destroyed in July 1838 'in the presence of several trainers and jockeys, who had been invited to do him the last honours, and, having given 'three times three' over his grave, toasted his memory in a bumper.' It has not been possible to verify this tale, but it suggests that some form of celebration or commemoration ritual beyond human-like burial and gravestone may have taken place at times. See: Robert Black, *Horse Racing in England* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1893), 97, and "Notes off Hand," *New Sporting Magazine*, 15, no. 88 (Aug 1838): 121.

former racehorses were ‘used up’ by uncaring humans, and sent to the knackers for their corpses to be repurposed.

Select racehorses were not solely memorialised by burial in marked graves. The 19th century saw an increase in equine taxidermy, especially hoof trophies, as a popular way to preserve and commemorate a valued racehorse. To produce a hoof trophy, the foot of the horse was cut off after the animal had died and sent to a taxidermist who removed the hoof capsule from the foot. This was cleaned and treated before being mounted in silver or gold. This practice continued into the early 20th century, with a number of prime examples of hoof trophies stemming from this period.



Fig. 3. Eclipse Foot trophy, The Jockey Club.

One of the oldest and most elaborate hoof trophies features what is said to be one of the hooves of the racehorse Eclipse, who died in 1789 (fig. 3).³⁸ As discussed earlier in chapter 4, Eclipse, who was and still is one of the most famous racehorses of all time, was dissected by the French veterinary surgeon St. Bel, who was influential in the founding of the Royal Veterinary College in London two years later. St. Bel mounted Eclipse's articulated skeleton and reportedly preserved some other parts of Eclipse's body, including his hide and one or more hooves. In the decades that followed Eclipse's death, the preserved parts of his body according to Eclipse biographer Nicholas Clee, 'were acquiring the status of religious relics.'³⁹ In 1832, William IV presented the extravagantly mounted hoof of Eclipse to the Jockey Club to use as a trophy for a challenge race at Ascot.⁴⁰ The race, aptly named the Eclipse Foot, was only run three times, and the trophy remains at the Jockey Club Rooms today.

Hoof trophies were by far the most widespread form of horse taxidermy in the 19th century and early 20th century, and are commonly found in museum and historic house collections today.⁴¹ The National Horseracing Museum has hoof trophies from 28 different racehorses in its collection. Unlike the Eclipse Foot trophy, these were more understated trophies, which were never intended to be awarded as trophies at all. Rather, they were decorative and often practical objects. Like the graves of famous racehorses, however, hoof trophies tend to bear some form of inscription on the silverwork that surrounds parts of the foot.

³⁸ The hoof has not been DNA tested, and its appearance more than forty years after the horse's death causes me to express some uncertainty regarding its authenticity. Only Eclipse's skeleton, which is now at the Royal Veterinary College in London, has been scientifically authenticated. See: M. A. Bower et. al., "Truth in the Bones: Resolving the Identity of the Founding Elite Thoroughbred Racehorses," *Archaeometry*, 54, no.5 (2012): 916 – 925.

³⁹ Nicholas Clee, *Eclipse* (London: Transworld Publishers, 2009), 272.

⁴⁰ The 'Eclipse Foot' race was run at Ascot as a challenge race, which was only open to members of the Jockey Club.

⁴¹ Hoof trophies also often come up for sale at auctions. The sheer frequency with which they are sold are a further testament to their prevalence.

This might be as simple as the horse's name, and the years it was born and died, while some go further and include a few famous races the horse had won or perhaps a personal emotional connection with the horse: one reads, 'No better of his sort e'er looked through a bridle'.⁴² These more personal engravings tend to express the animal's 'gameness' (the racehorse's willing participation in the sport, as discussed in Chapter 1), ensuring that the same anthropomorphic values which were attributed to the racehorse in life continue on into its afterlife.

The London-based taxidermist Rowland Ward, whose list of clients included Edward VII, printed a catalogue about the different objects his workshop could make from horse hooves.⁴³ Once dead, a racehorse's hooves might be removed and fashioned into a silver (and hoof) inkwell, a pincushion, or a candlestick holder (fig. 4). Ward stated that, 'The Hoofs of Animals are particularly suitable for preservation as trophies— as mementos of the hunt, or records of stirring incident, or as memorials of favourite animals that have been possessed and prized... The fore feet of a horse are to be preferred for preservation...'⁴⁴ Pat Morris, in his book about Rowland Ward, concluded that hoof trophies were a source of steady profit for the business.⁴⁵

Rowland Ward was also known for producing 'animal furniture' (practical objects such as chairs, lamps etc. which incorporated part of at least one dead animal). There seemed to be no limit to Ward's creativity where animal furniture was concerned, and his creations included a bear fashioned into a dumb waiter and a young giraffe turned into a chair. Among Ward's 'animal furniture' that

⁴² Hoof trophy, 1892, National Horseracing Museum, Newmarket, object no. NHRM 1985 LN 151.

⁴³ Rowland Ward, *Observations on the Preservations of Hoofs and the Designing of Hoof-Trophies* (London: Rowland Ward, Limited, 1902).

⁴⁴ Ward does not state why a horse's fore feet were better than the hind ones for hoof trophies. Because a horse's fore and hind feet are not shaped identically, it is possible that he felt the fore feet were more aesthetically pleasing. Ward, *Observations on the Preservations of Hoofs and the Designing of Hoof-Trophies*, 3.

⁴⁵ Morris, *Rowland Ward*, 21.

incorporated racehorse's hooves were an umbrella stand, a waste bin, and a footstool, the 'feet' of all of which were made from the hooves of famous racehorses.⁴⁶

Hoof trophies and furniture which incorporated racehorse hooves mirror the proliferation of mass-market secular human relics in the 19th century which Lutz identified in her research.⁴⁷ Like lockets which incorporated human hair and other trinkets made from human remains, hoof trophies and animal furniture incorporating hooves caused parts of famous racehorse's bodies to be fashioned into commercial goods which had a practical purpose in a house or office. Much of their meaning depended on the racehorse's name remaining attached to that object, and the human memories associated with the horse.



Fig. 4. A variety of hoof trophies by Rowland Ward. From left to right: a candlestick holder, a letter balance, and a match box.

⁴⁶William G. Fitzgerald, "Animal Furniture," *Strand Magazine: an illustrated monthly*, 12 (July 1896): 273- 280. Bonhams Sporting Sale, Jun 21, 2012, Lot 92, 93, 94.

⁴⁷ Lutz, *Relics of Death in Victorian Literature and Culture*.

In her exploration of ‘animal-things’, Poliquin examines hunting trophies, in particular mounted heads, which she says ‘can never be a neutral object’ because they are ‘the essence of an animal’s magnificence and individuality.’ She points out that, because the heads are displayed without the animal’s bodies, they are not like other forms of taxidermy; they are ‘decidedly deader.’⁴⁸ Yet, as Karen Jones has concluded, ‘The trophy required a story to furnish its being, its significance, its embodiment...’⁴⁹ Despite the significant differences between how they were acquired, there are clear parallels between hoof trophies and hunting trophies; both allowed people to tell stories of animal encounters with a part of a deceased animal still present.

Hoof trophies, and animal furniture incorporating horse hooves, are a rather different form of ‘animal-thing’ than Poliquin may have initially intended with her terminology, but it is difficult to imagine a more ‘thingy’ animal object that these, merging physical animal body parts into practical material objects intended for future use, which are intertwined with human memories of a known deceased racehorse. Like the disembodied head of a stag, hooves are ‘decidedly deader’ than many other forms of taxidermy. There is no illusion to lifelike features in a racehorse hoof that has been turned into a snuffbox. Instead, it is the engravings on these hoof trophies which give them their individuality, and their potential as conversation pieces; remove the engraving and a hoof trophy becomes the hoof of an anonymous dead horse that’s part of a decorative and/or functional object. The engraving is central to a hoof trophy’s meaning. This is a concept I will examine in further depth in the two case studies of St. Simon and Persimmon.

Like racehorse burials and gravestones, hoof trophies existed in opposition to the dominant narrative of what happened to racehorses in old age and death. Hoof trophies allowed humans to spend money on preserving part of a deceased horse, and having it turned into a valuable animal-thing, which was then displayed in

⁴⁸ Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo*, 148, 151.

⁴⁹ Jones, *Epiphany in the Wilderness*, 262.

the home. The meanings are the human memories attached to the deceased racehorse and why it was valued; the subtext is, ‘this horse wasn’t turned into glue.’ Hoof trophies told an alternative story of racehorse existence and death, and allowed a person (usually with a direct connection to the deceased racehorse) to display their benevolence toward horses.

Although far less common than hoof trophies, sometimes other parts of prized racehorses were also preserved after the animal had died. The tail was mounted, or strands of it turned into decorative additions to whips and trays; the head might be stuffed, or the hide preserved and displayed. A description of racehorse trainer Matthew Dawson’s house in the late 19th century states that he had on display the ‘hoofs of Thormanby and Thunder, tails of Chanticleer, Thormanby and Juilius, a piece of the skin of Eclipse...’⁵⁰ With the exception of Eclipse, all these pieces of taxidermy were made from horses that Dawson had trained, and the writer, William Allison recalled that, ‘Amid trophies of the past... we naturally had had any amount of subjects for conversation.’⁵¹ Allison’s brief recollection of his time at Dawson’s house among pieces of racehorse taxidermy give us a glimpse into the spaces where such animal-things were kept, while simultaneously providing evidence that they held meanings and were tools for reminiscing. Their presence in Dawson’s house showed that he valued the horses he had trained.

⁵⁰ William Allison, *Memories of Men & Horses* (London: Grant Richards Ltd., 1925), 51.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 51.



Fig. 5. Robert the Devil in the shop window display at Gibson's Saddlery, Newmarket, 2015.

There are a number of 'celebrity horses' from around the world whose hides were stuffed and mounted. Napoleon's horse Vizir is in the collection of the Musée de l'Armée in Paris, where it has recently undergone extensive restoration work.⁵² The famous Australian racehorse Phar Lap (1926 - 1932) can be seen today at the Melbourne Museum.⁵³ The only example of full-body taxidermy of a British racehorse from the 19th century which was mounted as a likeness of the living horse and survives into the present day seems to be Robert the Devil (1877–1889). Although little is known about the early years of Robert the

⁵² See the Musée de l'Armée's online collections database entry at: <http://www.musee-armee.fr/collections/base-de-donnees-des-collections/objet/cheval-ayant-appartenu-a-napoleon-ier.html> (Accessed 16 October 2016).

⁵³ See Museum Victoria's online collections database entry at: Museums Victoria Collections <http://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/specimens/139139> (Accessed 16 October 2016).

Devil's afterlife, the stuffed horse made its way into a saddler's shop at Newmarket (it is visible in the 1954 film *Rainbow Jacket*), and today is a feature in the shop window of Gibson's Saddlery (also at Newmarket) where it is used to display products—a sun-bleached version of the once living racehorse of more than a hundred years ago (fig 5). The Robert the Devil taxidermy is far from an anonymous stuffed horse, but one that still represents this individual horse's achievements which humans prized in him when alive. Its use as a shop mannequin causes it to be 'dressed up' in blankets and saddlery, ensuring regular tactile encounters between humans and long-deceased horse.

In some cases, a racehorse's skeleton was preserved after the animal had died. As mentioned earlier, Eclipse was dissected after he died suddenly in 1789 by the French veterinary surgeon Vial de St. Bel, who also preserved the horse's skeleton and skin.⁵⁴ In December that year, St. Bel offered a course of lectures at a cost of six guineas, as well as a residential veterinary training for £100 a year, at his premises in St. Martin's Street off Leicester Square. At the same address, members of the public could also see 'the famous horse Eclipse, represented as when alive, in his natural skin, together with his skeleton' between 11am to 3pm, at a cost of Half a Crown.⁵⁵ Eclipse's skeleton and his stuffed hide were used as teaching tools and as money makers to entertain and educate a curious public. During the 19th century, Eclipse's skeleton went on a bizarre journey that has been documented by a number of historians. The skeleton ended up in the possession of the veterinary surgeon Bracy Clark, who acquired it in lieu of a debt owed to him by Eclipse's owner's vet (who, presumably, had been given the skeleton by St. Bel or Eclipse's former owner).⁵⁶ By 1822, Clark had deposited the skeleton at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly (a museum of curiosities) and

⁵⁴ *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, March 7, 1789, NP. An earlier newspaper report indicates that a grand funeral was planned for the horse, with Lord Abingdon and the Dukes of Grafton and Richmond, and Lord Grosvenor said to be attending. 'Mourning rings' were supposedly made from Eclipse's last set of horseshoes by a farrier. See: "Eclipse's Internment," *Stuart's Star and Evening Advertiser*, March 5, 1789, NP.

⁵⁵ Classified Advertisement, *Oracle Bell's New World*, December 21, 1789, NP.

⁵⁶ Clee, *Eclipse*, 271.

offered it for sale at a price of 100 guineas.⁵⁷ Clark failed to find a seller, but eventually in 1860, the veterinary surgeon Professor Gamgee, who had established a veterinary college in Edinburgh, bought the skeleton from Clark for 50 guineas. This purchase was widely reported in the press, and the skeleton's authenticity much questioned.⁵⁸ It is also worth noting that, when Eclipse biographer Theodore Andrea Cook researched Eclipse's relics at the turn of the 20th century, he said that there were 'six 'undoubted' skeletons of Eclipse' in existence, and raised doubts over the authenticity of many other Eclipse relics.⁵⁹ Eclipse's skeleton ended up at the Royal Veterinary College in London in 1871, where it has mostly remained ever since. A study in 2012 confirmed its authenticity.⁶⁰

The journey of Eclipse's skeleton is easily the most elaborate afterlife of any racehorse skeleton, although, as Isinglass's macabre exhumation suggests, perhaps not the most bizarre one. Other racehorse skeletons in museum collections include Hyperion (National Horseracing Museum), an early 19th century racehorse speculated to be Pot8os (National Horseracing Museum), Ambush II (National Museums Liverpool), and Persimmon (Natural History Museum, Kensington) who will be discussed later in more detail.

Unlike hoof trophies, or taxidermied tails, heads etc., skeletons were not preserved for private display. The racehorse skeleton was primarily a public object for public learning and scientific study. Most of these are found in veterinary teaching collections and natural history museums, which indicates that they had and continue to have some educational value. Poliquin applies the term 'animal-thing' explicitly to taxidermy because of its life-like illusion. Skeletons,

⁵⁷ "A Short History of the Celebrated Race-Horse Eclipse," *Monthly Magazine*, 53, no. 367 (May 1822): 306.

⁵⁸ "The Skeleton of Eclipse," *The Racing Times*, November 19, 1860, 371. "Skeleton of Eclipse," *The Racing Times*, January 14, 1861, 15.

⁵⁹ Theodore Andrea Cook, *Eclipse & O'Kelly* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1907), 65.

⁶⁰ Bower et. al., "Truth in the Bones," 916 – 925.

perhaps even more so that disembodied stuffed heads, are unmistakably dead. Yet, their presence also runs against the popular racehorse life and death narrative of the time. They are yet another example of a racehorse being valued after death— racehorses that ‘escaped indignity’.

This survey has focused on what humans preserved and created from deceased racehorses. It points to a potentially varied afterlife of prized racehorses, and one which runs counter to popular 19th century narrative in art and fiction of the neglected former racehorse being sent to the knackers. But what happens when we consider an individual racehorse’s afterlife? Using the famous horses St. Simon and Persimmon as case studies to piece together what happened to the bodies of two racehorses after they had died, I hope to not just build object biographies (or is it animal-thing biographies?) for them, but to take a closer look at their meanings, and consider how these meanings might have changed over time.

St. Simon (*b. 1881, d. 1908*)

St Simon died on April 2, 1908 at the age of 27, after an illustrious career on the racecourse and at stud. During his brief racing career, St. Simon won the Gold Cup at Epsom, the Newcastle Cup and the Goodwood Cup, to name but a few races, and was retired at the end of his three-year-old year, unbeaten on the Turf. At stud, St. Simon fathered many winners, and brought in hundreds of thousands of pounds in stud fees for his owner, the Duke of Portland, making St Simon one of the most important sires of his day, and a valuable asset for the Duke.⁶¹ The horse’s death was widely reported in the press. A lengthy obituary in *The Times* remarked that, ‘St. Simon’s influence on the thoroughbred is incalculable. His stock are found all over the world.’⁶² Another called the death of St. Simon an

⁶¹ It is difficult to verify this figure from stud accounts, which do not distinguish between individual horses. It is more than possible, however, that this was the total.

⁶² “Death of St. Simon,” *The Times*, April 3, 1908, 13.

‘irreparable loss.’⁶³ His obituaries focused on three things: St. Simon’s wins on the racecourse; his stud fees; and his progeny.

On April 6, four days after St. Simon’s death, several newspapers reported that St. Simon’s body had been removed from the Welbeck Estate in Nottinghamshire and was being taken to London.⁶⁴ The 6th Duke of Portland, who was fond of having his best racehorses memorialised, had the taxidermist Rowland Ward preserve the horse’s hide and mount it in a frame (fig. 7). Ward also preserved St. Simon’s skeleton, and mounted two of his hooves as a silver gilded desk set (fig. 6), and a further one into a silver snuffbox, all of which survive into the present day.

Welbeck Abbey was also the site of a horse cemetery, where a total of fifteen horses were buried in marked graves. One of these gravestones is for St. Simon although what, if any, parts of the horse were buried there remains questionable when we consider just how much of St. Simon’s body was preserved. In his *Memoirs of Racing and Hunting*, the Duke of Portland mentioned that he hoped his prized horse Galopin would die at Welbeck, so that he might be buried there in the cemetery, where he would have been ‘an ornament... to the Burial Ground.’⁶⁵ The Duke’s use of the word ‘ornament’ corresponds with Collison’s interpretation of racehorse graves as outdoor ‘trophy rooms’.⁶⁶ St. Simon’s marked burial may, therefore, not purely have been a mark of respect or an act which created a space for memorialising the animal, but also a way for Duke to demonstrate his own excellence as a racehorse owner, and his goodwill towards his horses.⁶⁷

⁶³ “The Death of St. Simon,” *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, April 6, 1908, 12.

⁶⁴ “To-day's Gossip,” *Nottingham Evening Post*, April 6, 1908, 4. “Ormonde's Weekly Letter,” *Hull Daily Mail*, April 6, 1908, 8. “St. Simon,” *Sheffield Independent*, April 6, 1908, 12.

⁶⁵ “The Duke of Portland,” *Racing and Hunting* (London: Faber & Faber, 1935).

⁶⁶ Collison, “Remembering man's other best friend,” 70 – 107.

⁶⁷ On 14 July, 1933, the Duke of Portland was interviewed for Sports Talk on BBC Radio to commemorate 50 years since St. Simon’s first win at Goodwood. Unfortunately



Fig. 6. The hooves of the racehorse St. Simon turned into a silver gilded desk set.

St. Simon was, quite evidently, what Hoskins has termed a ‘significant possession’, and pieces of him were significant in their own right after death.⁶⁸ The fact that two of his hooves were mounted in silver gilt is the most obvious expression of their significance. Engraved upon the inkwell is the following text:

‘‘St Simon’— By ‘Galopin’—’St. Angela’

Born 1881 Died 1908

Winner Ascot Gold Cup 1884

During his racing career he was never vanquished and up to the time of his death his stock gained in stakes more than five hundred thousand Pounds.’

A further hoof was mounted in silver and turned into a snuffbox, also bearing the same engraving. St Simon’s hooves, therefore, even though they were turned into

this radio broadcast does not survive. A review of the program says that the Duke ‘told the story of his favourite horses simply, racily, and with a good deal of that kindly feeling for animals with which both he and the Duchess are so noted throughout the country.’ See: *Radio Times*, Issue 511, 14 July, 1933, 51; ‘‘The Talk of London,’’ *Sheffield Independent*, 24 July, 1933, 6.

⁶⁸ Hoskins, *Biographical Objects*, 196.

valuable objects, remained connected with the once living horse's achievements and the anthropomorphic character traits associated with the animal. The words 'never vanquished' speak of gallant battles fought on the racecourse— British sporting values which were prized in St. Simon when he was alive. While the disembodied heads of hunting trophies, which Poliquin says show a hunter's 'desire to immortalize a powerful narrative of personal significance,' the engravings on St. Simon's hooves immortalise personal *and* equine significance.⁶⁹ The similarities in the sporting narrative are similar, however. The mounted head of a stag shows how the hunter conquered a previously unknown animal of his desire; St. Simon's hooves show how a horse that the Duke owned conquered other horses, thereby reflecting St. Simon's greatness as a racehorse and the Duke's greatness as an owner. This narrative continues after St. Simon's death via the hoof trophies, which give the narrative a material form. The material value of the hoof trophies (mounted in silver and silver gilt) also allowed the Duke of Portland to express how much he valued this horse, and that he continued to do so even after the horse was deceased.

Today, the silver gilded desk set made from St. Simon's hooves is at York Racecourse, after the Duke of Portland donated it in 1973. The hooves are kept in a strong room, having been deemed too valuable to safely keep them on display. The hoof that was turned into a snuffbox is at the Jockey Club in Newmarket, a private members' club. Thus, only a few people ever engage with the animal-things they were turned into, and when this occurs, it is primarily an act of looking. They are no longer used for the practical purposes of an inkwell or snuffbox. There is something abstract in these disembodied pieces, much as there is in all hoof trophies. The hooves are clearly parts of a horse, right down to the horseshoes, which have been specially crafted as part of the hoof trophy. Yet, hoof horn and engravings remind those who look about the achievements of the long-deceased champion racehorse who was so valued that his hooves were mounted in silver and gold.

⁶⁹ Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo*, 149.

A few years after St. Simon had died, and Rowland Ward had mounted the animal's skeleton, the Duke evidently changed his mind about displaying the skeleton at Welbeck Abbey, and offered it to what is now the Natural History Museum in London (then British Museum, Natural History) in 1914. From correspondence held at the Natural History Museum Archives, it is evident Sidney Harmer, Keeper of the Zoological Department, was pleased about the offer. One memo reads: 'The skeleton would be a valuable addition to the study series. Dr. Harmer understands that two applications were made for it, some years ago, but that they were unsuccessful. It is thus gratifying to have the offer made now....'⁷⁰ In a later note from the Zoological Department which was presented to the trustees of the museum, Dr. Harmer described St Simon as, 'a specially interesting horse, not only for his own successes, but as having been the ancestor of a large proportion of race-horses which have been successful in more recent years, up to the present time.'⁷¹

The so-called 'study series' was a large percentage of the Natural History Museum's collection, most of which was not on public view. The study series allowed naturalists to closely consult a wide range of specimens, often from the same species. A 1913 guide published by the British Museum explained that, 'these reserve collections... constitute, from a scientific point of view, the most important part of the Museum.'⁷² The Keeper of Zoology therefore expected St. Simon's skeleton to be of value for scientific research purposes, and the primary reasons for that were the horse's success on the racecourse, and the successes of his offspring. St. Simon's skeleton was not intended for public display, however. Only 'accredited students' who applied in writing to the museum's director

⁷⁰ S. F. Harmer, 24 March 1914. [letter]. DF ADM/1000/99/859. London: Natural History Museum Archives.

⁷¹ Zoological Department, June 22, 1914. [memorandum]. DF ADM/1000/99/1839. London: Natural History Museum Archives.

⁷² *British Museum (Natural History): General Guide* (London: William Crown and Sons, 1913), 13.

specifying their profession and research interest, and included a letter of recommendation might be granted access to study series.⁷³

A further indication of the interest Dr. Harmer may have had in St. Simon's skeleton can be found in a guide to the horse specimens at the British Museum (Natural History) from 1907, also published by the museum. At that time, the bones of the fore and hind legs of the Thoroughbred racehorse Stockwell (1849 – 1876) were displayed alongside those of a Shire horse (a large draught breed). The guide compared the differences in the bones of these different types of horses, trying to find out what caused the Thoroughbred to be so fast. It cautioned, however that more specimens were needed before a definitive conclusion could be reached.⁷⁴ With St Simon's record as a winning racehorse and successful sire, his skeleton may have been regarded as a useful example of a fast horse to compare with other Thoroughbred specimens, and draught horses.

Whatever the specific research questions the Keeper of Zoology hoped to answer with St. Simon's skeleton, it is undeniable that this skeleton continued to be associated with what the horse had achieved for humans while he was alive. St. Simon's skeleton was preserved and mounted because of the Duke of Portland's personal connection to him. Although less personal (it is highly unlikely that any the scientists at the museum ever interacted with St. Simon while he was alive), the Keeper of Zoology regarded this unmistakably dead skeleton as 'valuable' and 'interesting' because the animal had been a successful racehorse and sire. Therefore, anthropomorphic as well as statistical values were attached to St. Simon's skeleton, which in turn made it a valuable, interesting animal-thing worthy of a place in the museum's collection and scientific study. This was not an anonymous horse skeleton, but the skeleton of the champion racehorse and sire St. Simon.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁷⁴ *Guide to the Specimens of the Horse Family (Equidae) Exhibited in the Department of Zoology, British Museum (Natural History)* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1907), 26.



Fig. 7. St. Simon's hide at Heath House, Newmarket, 2015.

After his death, St. Simon's hide was preserved by the naturalist Rowland Ward. The skins of St. Simon and two further horses, Donovan and Ayreshire, used to be in one of the supper rooms at Welbeck Abbey, where they were displayed alongside ornithological taxidermy.⁷⁵ Eventually the 9th Duke of Portland's wife decided she would rather not have these macabre heirlooms in the house, and asked the trainer at Heath House, Newmarket whether he would like them. St. Simon's skin, which once allowed the Duke of Portland to visibly demonstrate that his horses did not die an undignified end, had lost some of its initial meaning. This part of St. Simon was no longer wanted in a domestic space.

Today, St. Simon's hide hangs in the corridor leading to the indoor riding arena at Heath House where St. Simon was once trained. It is surrounded by photographs and descriptions of the horse. Its meanings are manifold: the hide of the horse returned to the place where it once lived and was trained; the hide of the horse representing the heritage of the training stables; the hide as a rejected object from its initial 'home'; the hide as a macabre object of curiosity (the response I received from nearly everyone in Newmarket who heard that I was interested in the skins). Time and location may have faded some of its meanings, but new meanings have been attached to it in their place. Now it forms part of a

⁷⁵ William Cavendish-Bentinck, *Men Women and Things* (London: Faber & Faber, 1937), 104.

three-horse shrine to greatness, a material expression of the racing heritage of one particular training stable. Like St. Simon's skeleton, this is a 'decidedly dead' specimen. Yet, the multitude of meanings attached to it lend a power to this animal-thing far beyond an anonymous horse hide.

Viewed as a whole, the animal-things which St. Simon's body was turned into after his death are simultaneously disembodied and meaning-laden. Alone the fact that St. Simon had multiple 'resting places' (Welbeck Abbey, Newmarket, York and London) speak of an exceptional afterlife. St. Simon was turned into commodities (a desk-set made of hooves and a snuffbox), into an educational tool (a skeleton at a museum), and his hide was preserved in a frame where the mane is clearly visible, like some oversized piece of mourning jewellery.

Each preserved part of St. Simon and each location lend St. Simon different meanings, although their initial meanings may have been similar. They were once a way for the Duke of Portland to demonstrate his success as a racehorse owner, and St. Simon's success – and to hold onto those meanings after the horse had died. They also allowed the Duke to show in different places (a graveyard, in a supper room, possibly in his office or study) that he was a benevolent owner, not just a successful one; he valued his prized Thoroughbreds even when they were no longer of use.

Today, these parts of St. Simon (with the exception of his skeleton) primarily represent historical successes. Consider St. Simon's hoof at the Jockey Club Rooms, or his hide at Heath House, both which help to make the history of success tangible at two different institutions. The racehorse-fallen-on-hard-times narrative, which hovered over all living racehorses in the 19th and early 20th century, and was a primary reason for racehorse owners preserving parts of their most successful horses after they died, is far less dominant today than it was when St. Simon died, although traces of it still linger.⁷⁶ The skeleton, hoof

⁷⁶ Ethical issues surrounding contemporary horse racing resurface regularly in public discourse when a horse sustains fatal injuries during or after a race. The British charity

trophies, and hide have shared and separate biographies, just as St. Simon had in life.

Persimmon (b. 1893 d. 1908)

The racehorse Persimmon, a son of St. Simon, belonged to King Edward VII. He won the Derby and was retired to stud after a two-year-long racing career in 1898. He also went on to become one of the leading sires of the period. Persimmon died in February 1908, after fracturing his pelvis a month earlier.⁷⁷ Like St. Simon, his death was widely reported in the press. *The Times* recalled Persimmon's important wins – 'the Coventry Stakes, Ascot, and Richmond Stakes, Goodwood... The Derby... the St. Ledger and Jockey Club Stakes... the Ascot Gold Cup and Eclipse Stakes at Sandown Park...' – and his successful offspring.⁷⁸ The *Sporting Times*, while also listing Persimmon's successes, pronounced that, 'Such a horse in the ownership of the King was a power for good, and gave dignity to the Turf as a national institution, and his death at a

Retraining of Racehorses and other similar charitable organisations in the United States provide a service retraining and rehoming horses no longer of use to the sport of horse racing, while simultaneously working to rewrite the modern version of the racehorse-fallen-on-hard-times narrative in the public imagination. See: Phil McManus, Glenn Albrecht and Raewyn Graham, *The Global Horseracing Industry* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 137 -155; Tamar V.S. McKee, *Ghost Herds: Rescuing Horses and Horse People in Bluegrass Kentucky* (PhD Thesis, University of British Columbia, 2014); Shelly R. Scott, "The Racehorse as Protagonist: Agency, Independence, and Improvisation," in *Animals and Agency: An Interdisciplinary Exploration*, Sarah McFarland and Ryan Hediger (eds.) (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), 45 – 66; Iris Bergmann, "Sustainability, Thoroughbred Racing and the Need for Change," *Pferdeheilkunde*, 31, no. 5 (2015): 490-49; C. Jill Stowe and Michelle L. Kibler, "Characteristics of Adopted Thoroughbred Racehorses in Second Careers," *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 19, no. 1(2016): 81 – 89.

⁷⁷ "Current Topics," *Sporting Times*, 18 January 1908, 7.

⁷⁸ "Sporting Intelligence," *The Times*, 20 February 1908, 12.

comparatively early age is a calamity.’⁷⁹ The Manchester Courier proclaimed that Persimmon’s loss was ‘not only a severe one to the King personally, but to breeders generally.’⁸⁰ After his death, Persimmon’s head, tail, skeleton and hooves were preserved by Rowland Ward.⁸¹ In *The Graphic*, Persimmon’s skeleton featured in the photo story *The Life Story of a Racehorse from the Cradle to the Grave*.⁸² As with St. Simon, ‘the grave’ was a rather simplified version of events, however.

After Rowland Ward had mounted Persimmon’s skeleton, it was taken to Sandringham, presumably for display somewhere on the property but it didn’t remain there for long.⁸³ In February 1910, the press reported that the King was donating Persimmon’s articulated skeleton to the Natural History Museum in Kensington.⁸⁴ The museum had a growing collection of racehorse skeletons and skulls. In 1907, skulls and whole skeletons included the 1852 St. Leger winner Stockwell, Derby winner Bend Or, Royal Hampton, Donovan and Corrie Roy. The King had already donated the skeleton of his Grand National winner Ambush II to Liverpool University for display in their veterinary anatomy museum in 1905.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ “Persimmon,” *Sporting Times*, 22 February 1908, 7.

⁸⁰ “Death of Persimmon,” *Manchester Courier*, 20 February 1908, 3.

⁸¹ One article mentions that parts of Persimmon’s hide were used to decorate gold and silver boxes which the King gave away as gifts, but I have been unable to find any examples of these if they did exist. See: “Our Notebook,” *Sporting Times*, 13 May 1916, 4.

⁸² “The Life Story of a Racehorse from the Cradle to the Grave,” *The Graphic*, 12 March, 1910, 349.

⁸³ In 1909, the zoologist James Cossar Ewart, who conducted extensive cross-breeding experiments with zebras, horses and donkeys, received permission from Lord Marcus Beresford to measure Persimmon’s skull for research purposes. See: Letter to James Cossar Ewart from Lord Marcus Beresford, 30 October, 1909, Edinburgh University Special Collections, Coll-14/9/15/28

⁸⁴ “Table Talk,” *London Daily News*, 7 February, 1910, 4.

⁸⁵ “Skeleton of Ambush II,” *Manchester Courier*, 27 February, 1905, 6.

Prior to the installation of Persimmon's skeleton at the Natural History Museum in the autumn of 1910, it went on tour to the International Shooting and Field Exhibition in Vienna, where Rowland Ward reported that it 'attracted a large share of attention.'⁸⁶ The primary purpose of the Shooting and Field Exhibition was to promote the economic value of shooting and field sports and to foster understanding and appreciation among the general public for their cultural value.⁸⁷ The exhibition was a popular and financial success; it attracted more than 2.7 million paying visitors from Austria and around the world during its staging from May to October 1910.⁸⁸

Inside the purpose-built British Pavilion, which looked like a mock Tudor house from the outside, Persimmon's skeleton had pride of place. It formed part of a larger exhibition of British racing ephemera, including the skeletons of Eclipse and Hermit (on loan from the Royal Veterinary College), the Eclipse Foot trophy (on loan from the Jockey Club), as well as numerous sculptures of racehorses. Persimmon's skeleton itself was exhibited with an impression of the horse's head (possibly the one visible in later photographs taken at the museum), as well as the horse's saddle and bridle. The pavilion also contained numerous hunting trophies and a stuffed lion.⁸⁹ Persimmon's skeleton in this environment served a different purpose than other racehorse skeletons. Here, it functioned to promote field sports in the British Empire, instead of scientific learning.

⁸⁶ Rowland Ward, *A Naturalist's Life Study* (London: Rowland Ward Ltd., 1913), 66.

⁸⁷ *Die Erste Internationale Jagdausstellung Wien 1910: Ein Monumentales Gedenkenbuch* (Wien and Leipzig: Wilhelm Frick, 1912), NP.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁸⁹ "Kleine Chronik," *Neue Freie Presse*, 30 April, 1910, 8-9. "Die Jagd-Ausstellung," *Wiener Zeitung*, 15 May, 1910, 6 -7. *Die Erste Internationale Jagdausstellung Wien 1910: Ein Monumentales Gedenkenbuch*, 40 – 42.

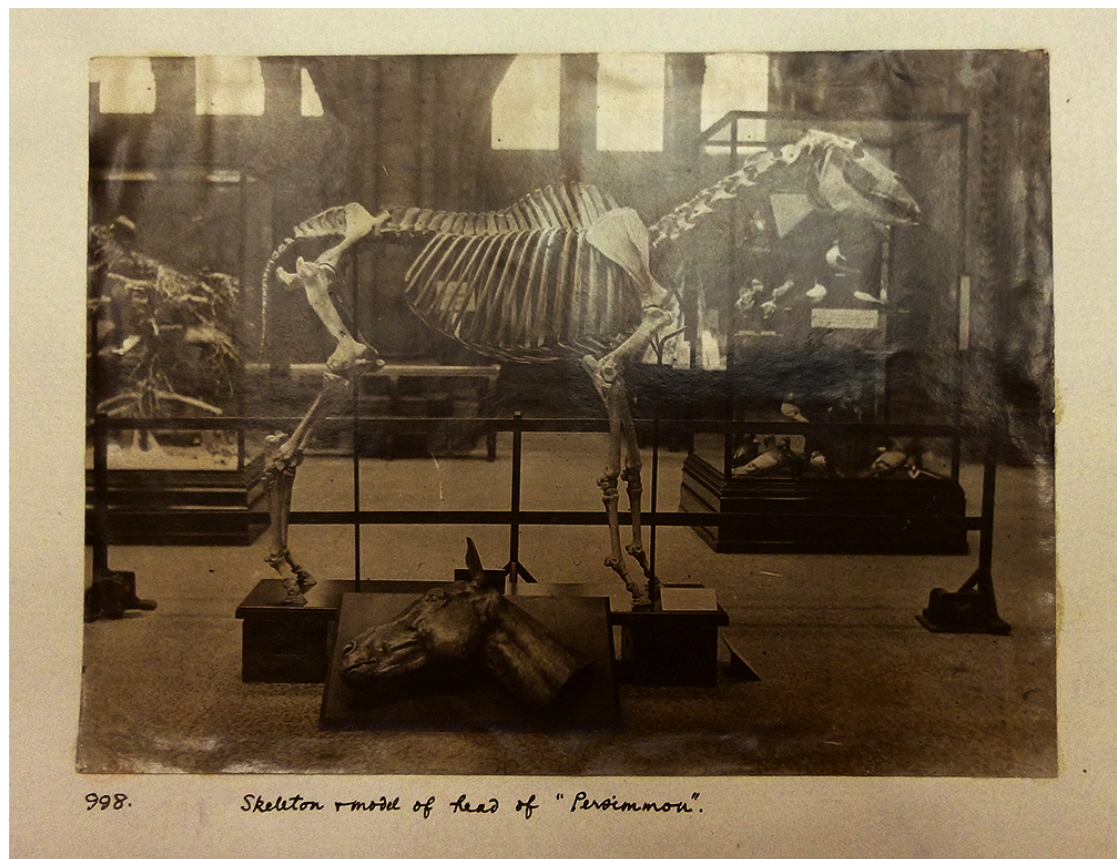


Fig. 8. Persimmon's skeleton and a mould of the horse's head on display at the Natural History Museum in Kensington, early 20th century. Note the label at the bottom right of the skeleton.

Upon the skeleton's return to Britain in the autumn of 1910, it went on display at the Natural History Museum (fig. 8). A memorandum indicates that museum officials were concerned that it might quickly receive a royal visitor:

'The skeleton of Persimmon will shortly be returned to the Museum from Vienna. Have you arranged a place for it in the North Hall? H.M. the King may come to see the skeleton soon after its arrival at the museum is reported to him.'⁹⁰ At the museum, Persimmon's skeleton was not an anonymous horse skeleton, but remained distinctly attached to human meanings about this particular animal. The skeleton still represented Persimmon — the now deceased King's deceased horse, the famous Derby winner— and, despite its 'deadness', it

⁹⁰ Memorandum from C. E. Fagan to Dr. S. F. Harmer, Oct. 17, 1910, Natural History Museum Archives, DF ZOO/200/58/17

might become a site of pilgrimage for his son George V.⁹¹ Displayed in the North Hall of the museum with other racehorse skeletons and skulls, one of its meanings had also morphed to scientific specimen, which was not present at the Vienna exhibition.

Unlike the skeleton, Persimmon's stuffed head, hooves and tail remained at Sandringham for what we have to assume was rather more private display. Persimmon's hooves were mounted in silver gilt and turned into two inkwells, both of which bear the engraving:

‘Foaled April 15th 1893,
Died Feb. 18th 1908.
Winner of the Derby,
St. Leger and Eclipse Stakes,
also the
Ascot Gold Cup.’

At some point, one of the hoof trophies was given to the Jockey Club, while a second, identical hoof trophy inkwell was auctioned off in 2010.⁹² Like the hoof trophies made from St. Simon's body, these hoof trophies indicate that Persimmon's value was his victories on the racecourse, although the engraving is devoid of anthropomorphic emotion. The silver gilded mounts further demonstrated the horse's value, and the King's reverence for Persimmon even after the horse's death.

⁹¹ “The King Visits Persimmon,” *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 18 January 1908, 4.

⁹² Lyon & Turnbull, Fine Jewellery & Silver sale, 30 November, 2010, Lot 273.



Fig. 9. Persimmon's head, Royal Collection.

Rowland Ward mounted the Persimmon's head in the display case so that the horse appears to look over a stable door (fig. 9). The stuffed head also wears Persimmon's headcollar, further adding to the lifelike illusion. Persimmon's head was originally kept in the house at Sandringham, while Persimmon's tail was

hung in the tack room by the stables.⁹³ Persimmon's disembodied head bears undeniable visual similarities with a stuffed hunting trophy. Yet, the fact that the head wears a headcollar and is mounted so that it looks over a stable door creates the illusion that the rest of Persimmon is merely hidden from view.⁹⁴ Unlike a hunting trophy, this particular style of mount (which Ward also used to mount the head of the Grand National winner Cloister), reminds the viewer that Persimmon was domesticated, and co-existed with humans during his life. Persimmon's head also has a wooden plaque affixed to the false stable door, which lists his racing achievements, much like a hoof trophy. Thus, Persimmon's head remained attached to his achievements on the racecourse, immortalising Edward VII's and Persimmon's significance, while simultaneously attempting to capture the essence of Persimmon for posterity.

Both Persimmon's head and tail have been on long-term loan from the Royal Collection to the National Horseracing Museum in Newmarket since the museum opened in 1983. Since then, the head has been on permanent display in one of the galleries.⁹⁵ The old gallery label asked the observer to engage simultaneously with Persimmon's racing achievements, as well as the fact that this head represented 'a fine example of Edwardian taxidermy.'

When the museum moved to new premises in October 2016, Persimmon's head was transported to its new location in the 'Royal Connections' gallery at the new heritage centre. Here, Persimmon's head represents part of the history of royal patronage of horse racing. Although the new gallery label continues to highlight Rowland Ward's involvement in the creation of Persimmon's stuffed head, the specimen stands out as a physical horse in an otherwise horse-less display

⁹³ Arthur F. Meyrick, "The End of Persimmon and His Famous Sire St. Simon: An Hour at Rowland Ward's," *Sporting Times*, 22 May, 1909, 5.

⁹⁴ The education officer at the National Horseracing Museum told me that, when Persimmon's head was displayed in the old museum, children sometimes tried to look at the back of the display case to 'see where the rest of the horse is.'

⁹⁵ Judy Froshaug, "Echoing to the thunder of a thousand famous hooves," *The Times*, Sep 24, 1983, 8.

enticing the museum visitor to consider the once living horse in the historical narrative. Just as Persimmon's head once allowed the King to show that Persimmon did not fall victim to the racehorse-fallen-on-hard-times narrative, the largely heroic narrative of racehorses within the museum continues this tradition. However, rather than being emblematic of this counter narrative of positive equine life and benevolent afterlife, Persimmon's head now forms a part of a larger, overarching positive story of racehorse lives that is present throughout the museum. Racehorse taxidermy, especially stuffed heads, has the potential to make the historical racehorse visible in the gallery, thereby allowing the animal to enter the historical narrative in a way that other museum objects — other 'things' — do not.

Persimmon's tail, however, remains in storage. Wrapped in tissue paper and kept in a box, encountering this piece of Persimmon is a rather different experience to viewing the stuffed head in a gallery. Much like a hoof trophy, or even Persimmon's head, it is a disembodied piece of horse. Coming into contact with the tail, I was reminded of the unknowability of the racehorse that it was once a part of. I could guess what Persimmon did with his tail, but the once live horse remained just out of my reach— precisely the animal-thing which Poliquin has identified. Yet, as with other forms of racehorse taxidermy, we know that this part of Persimmon was preserved because of two main reasons: Persimmon co-existed with humans and was valued by them, and Persimmon remained valued by humans until and after his death. A newspaper article from a year after Persimmon's death stated that,

‘the hairs of [Persimmon's tail] were much sought after in the horse's lifetime, and naturally much more so when he lay lifeless in his box; indeed I am told His Majesty would have had little of the tail for a saddle-room adornment has not orders been at once given to stop the many admirers of the Sandringham racer and sire from helping themselves.’⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Meyrick, “The End of Persimmon and His Famous Sire St. Simon,” 5.

Persimmon's tail represents human longing to possess a part of this specific racehorse. Like hoof horn, horsehair was relatively stable organic matter, and there was lots of it. But, if the story that was told about Persimmon's tail was true, then many people longed to have a piece of Persimmon after his death, but only the King himself was permitted to possess it. People wanted to keep Persimmon's tail hairs because of what he had achieved for humans, yet there was nothing accompanying Persimmon's tail to spell out what those achievements were. Today, only museum documentation ensures that Persimmon's tail remains a part of the horse's human-written legacy.

Persimmon had multiple resting places after he died. His skeleton went to Austria before being permanently housed at the Natural History Museum in Kensington. His head and hooves were displayed at Sandringham, and his tail once hung in the tack room. The veneration and preservation of Persimmon's body went directly against the racehorse-fallen-on-hard-times narrative, and his preserved remains were tangible representations of this. Simultaneously, they were ways to study the horse's importance to science, and to cling on to memories of human-animal coexistence, of the memories people had of this particular horse.

Conclusions

There were two narratives of racehorse life and death, two narratives existing in parallel in fiction and in real life. In one story, a racehorse enjoyed a few idyllic years before it was taken into training. It ran some races, maybe even won a few, and then ceased being of use to the sport of horse racing. In a still very horse-powered age in history, the racehorse was sold on to perform new functions for humans. It became a hunter or a general riding horse, and then, when it had ceased being of use there too, it was sold on for yet another new purpose, until eventually the former racehorse was no longer capable of performing any functions for humans while it was alive. The horse was killed, its past before cheering crowds on the racecourse long forgotten.

In the other story, the racehorse fulfilled human desires. The racehorse won races before being retired to stud to produce the next generation of racehorses, some of whom were also champions. Eventually, time or illness took a fatal toll on the horse's life and it died. A private and sometimes public outpouring of a specific kind of grief occurred – a recollection of the ways in which the racehorse had fulfilled what humans had wanted from it. Death did not end this narrative. Human memories and human actions made the narrative immortal, and burying the racehorse and preserving parts of its body were part of that narrative's immortality.

Marked graves, skeletons, hoof trophies, stuffed heads and tails, were all material manifestations of racehorses which were valued their entire lives and still venerated after death. By burying (parts of) a racehorse in a marked grave, which was often inscribed with the horse's greatest wins or most famous offspring, racehorse owners created a place for remembering the joy the horse had brought them, and the success they had enjoyed through the horse's co-existence with them. To regard racehorse gravestones purely as ways for racehorse owners to retain the public glory they shared with their horse's success feels superficial, especially when considered in the context of all the other ways in which parts the same racehorses were often preserved after they died. Marked graves were also a way for owners to make a visible statement that their most prized horses were valued for their entire lives, and the horse, and especially the human memories attached to that horse, continued to be valued even after its death.

The skeletons of famous racehorses may be 'decidedly deader' than all other animal-things, but they also represented the same positive narrative of racehorse existence. Preserved racehorse skeletons, which primarily performed a scientific function, were still sought after and valued because of the ways in which the racehorse had fulfilled human desires. Racehorse skeletons, such as that of Persimmon, which went on display as part of a celebration of British sport, before being valued in by a museum because of Persimmon's record of success as a racehorse and sire, preserve the positive narrative of human-racehorse co-existence. Humans projected worth onto the racehorse skeleton because of what the racehorse achieved while alive.

Whether skeleton, preserved hide, stuffed head or hoof trophy, the once living and breathing animal remains just out of reach, the very essence of an animal-thing. Racehorse taxidermy was about possession, about making that human connection with a specific animal's achievements immortal by ownership. Parts of racehorses often entered into human homes for the first time after the horse had died. Hoof trophies turned the disembodied feet of a once-prized racehorse into a utilitarian object which graced a desk or mantelpiece. By continuing to co-exist with a part of the now deceased animal, humans could demonstrate their benevolence for the horses they owned or trained, and make their own personal history with horses tangible to others.

To see a racehorse grave or a part of a dead racehorse is to know that the horse was once admired by humans in some way, most likely because it fulfilled human expectations. Sometimes that pride was too great to be contained in one place after the animal had died, and so, different parts of the horse's body were preserved in various costly processes and then dispersed – fragmented immortality. Perhaps you could say that these horses would have been immortal anyway, for a while at least. Even though they had died, they would have lived on in the minds of the people that knew them, the people who said, 'Can you remember when...?' But memories alone would not have tangibly written a new, positive narrative of racehorse life and death, and that was a primary purpose of these animal-things.

Conclusion

By herding the traces left by racehorses out of archives and libraries, the sport of horse racing in the 19th and early 20th century reveals itself to be a sport that has been shaped by humans and animals alike— and the racehorse appears as an historical actor capable of changing human behaviour and practice. As individual animals, racehorses were primarily prized by humans for what they achieved, yet in day-to-day human-animal interactions, equine behaviour could be altered by humans, and influence human actions as well.

Creating an equine athlete necessitated a constant balance between human requirements, racehorses' biological requirements, and racehorses' behaviour. Yet racehorses' bodies and behaviours were simultaneously physical enablers of human sport, and limiting factors. Humans could not rely that horses behaved uniformly, nor that their bodies were identical. As a result, trainers needed to tailor their training regimes, feeding, housing, and health care to suit different animals in their care; racehorses, in turn, responded in varying ways to feeding, stable designs, and training regimes.

The shift in the ages at which horses were brought into training and races, and the trend towards racing over shorter distances, were two of the most significant factors in the history of horse-racing during the 19th century. However, these changes had consequences for horses and humans alike. From the widespread concern that the Thoroughbred horse was deteriorating as a result of these changes, to modifying how trainers fed, housed, and prepared their horses for races, the seismic impact that the change in racehorse ages and racing distances had is difficult to over-emphasise.

Although this horse-centric approach to the history of horse racing shows how racehorses changed the sport of horse racing, it also revealed humans that had previously remained absent from the historical narrative, and has uncovered new roles played by racehorse trainers, and those in their employ. Racehorses required healthcare and hoof-care, and, by the late 19th century, farriers,

veterinary surgeons, and equine dentists were treating racehorses in training. Furthermore, racehorse trainers also acted as animal healthcare providers, who used their in-depth knowledge of each horse's individual body to monitor and doctor the horses in their care. The time constraints placed on racehorse trainers by the new 'younger' form of horse-racing, as well as racehorse trainers' knowledge of their horses' bodies meant that the relationship between racehorse trainer or owner, racehorse, and veterinary surgeon was not entirely without friction. Racehorse trainers and owners wanted their horses to remain healthy, and to recover as quickly as possible from illness or lameness. As a result, despite the large sums which racehorse owners spent on their horses, and the constant care and supervision given to horses in training, new veterinary treatment methods were sometimes rejected, despite their proven efficacy.

By examining the history of animal health as it relates to horse racing, it also becomes evident that each racehorse's constitution— that abstract definition of how a horse's body and behaviour was classified by humans— determined all aspects of racehorse management. Far from being a long-discarded theory in the 19th century, humoralism continued to play a vital role in how racehorses' bodies were understood, and influenced training, feeding, housing, and how lameness and other illnesses were treated. More than any other aspect of racehorse management, physic, and how it was utilised, demonstrates the difficulty of demarcating between 'veterinary medicine' and 'racehorse training;' racehorse health and racehorse training and performance were inextricably linked.

Exploring farriery and hoof-care during the 19th and early 20th also provides us with new insights into the changing attitudes towards animals during this time. Although racehorses were the beneficiaries of change, rather than leading actors in hoof-care innovation, following horses' hooves through the historical record reveals a complex relationship between equine bodies, human innovation, and human morality and sentiment. Horses hooves were a site where members of newly emerging veterinary profession tried to establish their intellectual and professional superiority over long-established shoeing farriers, and manufacturers of innovative patent horseshoes offered animal protection that could be purchased. Additionally, a group of 'Barefoot Evangelists' argued that

horses were perfectly made by God, and did not require shoes at all. Thus, focussing on just one part of the horse's body in the 19th and early 20th century—in this case, hooves—provides us with new understanding of changing human-animal relationships during this time, but also brings a whole new cast of characters into the historical narrative. Quite unexpectedly, perhaps, following the animals helps us find the humans too.

And so I return once more to where I began—to the racehorse Furiband and his humans in the painting at Calke Abbey. Just as Furiband and the relationship two people had with him were immortalised in a painting, humans memorialised prized racehorses after they had died. Racehorse graves, taxidermy and skeletons told a positive story of equine life and death, of co-operation, victory, and human longing for a specific animal which transcended its natural lifespan. In an age when equine life and death was everywhere, and the horse-fallen-on-hard-times narrative permeated human-equine interaction either figuratively or literally, the material culture of racehorse death allowed tales of anthropomorphic racehorses to endure long after the horse had died, and functioned as a counter-narrative in which great racehorses were immortal, and the humans closest to them were victorious and benevolent.

So, what's next for animal history and histories of horse sports? How might the history of horse racing in the 17th and 18th century change by taking a horse-centric approach? Could we rewrite the relationship between racing and equine health and disease during this time? Might we gain new insights into human-equine interaction which paints a more nuanced picture of how humans perceived horses? Furthermore, there are still many unexplored aspects of horse history in Britain in the 19th and 20th century. How equipment such as saddles, bridles and harness evolved has yet to be studied. An in-depth history of farriery in the 19th century was beyond the scope of this thesis, but is long overdue. The findings in this thesis also suggest that historians might reveal new histories of other 19th century horse sports such as hunting and polo, as well as agriculture and transportation, by examining how humans trained, fed, and cared for horses in these other fields. Additionally, studying the historical equine body presents numerous opportunities for collaboration with zooarchaeologists and

contemporary animal behaviourists to examine equine health and nutrition and equine behaviour. Animal-centric histories are only constrained by the sources which survive, and the unknowability of animals themselves. Yet, I would argue that this ambiguity is part of what makes animal histories so valuable; in this unknowability, we find visual and tactile encounters, emotions, and cross-species attempts at communication— we find the stories we have told for centuries about the animals in our lives.

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